

# Fact Sheet

## Bed Bugs

### What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are tiny reddish-brown insects that feed on human or animal blood, and are most active at night. They live close to their hosts when they are not feeding. They can hide in mattress seams and bed frames, furniture tables, in cracks in walls or floors, or in bedroom clutter. Having bed bugs doesn't mean your house is dirty.

### How are bed bugs spread?

Bed bugs are spread between places as people travel. They travel in seams of luggage, folded clothes, bedding, etc. People do not realize they are transporting bed bugs.

### Are there health risks from bed bugs?

Bed bugs are not known to spread disease. They are annoying because they cause itching and loss of sleep. The itching can lead to excessive scratching which may increase the chance of skin infections. Bed bugs may also cause anxiety, stress and insomnia.

### What are the signs and symptoms of a bed bug infestation?

- Bite marks on the face, neck, arms, hands, or other body parts while sleeping (bite marks may take up to 14 days to develop)
- Bed bug bites can range from no signs of the bite, to a serious allergic reaction. An allergic reaction to several bites may need medical attention.
- Finding bed bugs in mattresses and sheet folds
- Finding rusty-colored blood spots on the mattress or nearby furniture
- A sweet musty odour.

### How are bed bug bites treated?

They are best treated by avoiding scratching, applying special creams or lotions and taking medication. Your health care provider can help you decide what to use.

### How do you get rid of bed bugs?

- Wash bedding and clothing in hot water using laundry detergent, or put non-washable items in a clothes dryer for at least 30 minutes at a hot temperature.
- Vacuum all possible places with bed bugs, including the mattress, box spring, and bed. Use a scrub brush to remove bed bugs and eggs from the seams of mattresses. Empty the vacuum into a sealed plastic bag and throw the bag out immediately in a garbage can (with a lid). Wash the vacuum nozzles and brushes in hot water with detergent.
- Consult with your Environment Health Officer about other control options.

### How can bed bugs be prevented?

To prevent bed bugs from entering your home:

- When travelling, check your hotel room for signs of bedbugs. Keep your luggage off the floor and bed, or in a sealable plastic bag to prevent bed bugs from getting in.
- Closely inspect your luggage and clothing after you travel.
- Check second-hand furniture and bedding for bed bugs before buying.
- Regularly clean your home, vacuum the mattresses, and remove clutter.