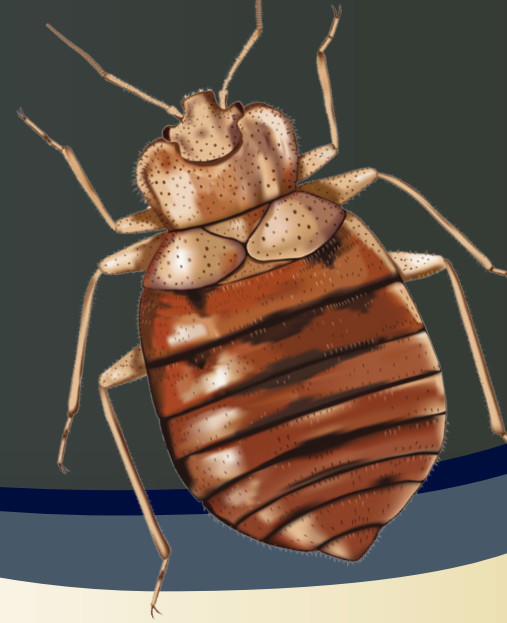


BED BUGS

fact sheet



WHAT ARE BED BUGS?

Bed bugs are small, brown insects about the size of an apple seed that take blood meals from humans. After a blood meal they swell in size and become dark red. Bed bugs are wingless and cannot fly. They are usually found near areas where people sleep.

HOW DO BED BUGS AFFECT MY HEALTH?

Bed bugs are not known to spread diseases to humans. There is a wide range of reactions to bed bug bites, from no reaction at all to itchy red bumps. If a bed bug is disturbed during feeding, they may take more than one blood meal from the same general site causing several bite marks close to each other. The bites are painless but may become itchy after a day or two. Scratching at the bites may cause infection. As well, many people become anxious and distressed as a result of exposure to bedbugs.



Actual Size
(Adult)

WHAT IS THE LIFE CYCLE OF BED BUGS?

There are three stages in the life of a bed bug: eggs, nymphs (or juveniles) and adults. The eggs have a coating that helps stick them to objects and they usually hatch in 6 to 17 days. Hatched nymphs start to feed on blood right away. The adult bed bug can live for more than 12 months because they become inactive when there is no host to feed on.

HOW DO BED BUGS SURVIVE?

Adult bed bugs take blood meals from humans which they use to produce eggs, while nymphs need blood to develop into adult bed bugs. Bed bugs usually feed for 3 to 15 minutes, depending on the stage. After feeding, bed bugs return to their hiding places which are usually close to where people sleep.

HOW DO BED BUGS GET INTO MY HOME?

Having bed bugs does not mean you are a poor housekeeper. Bed bugs can travel on things such as luggage and furniture or household goods that are moved from one place to another. The items that most often contain bed bugs are mattresses, box springs, couches and upholstered chairs, but bed bugs can also be found on a wide variety of other items such as electronics, books or pictures.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE BED BUGS?

Potential signs of bed bugs include:

- Unexplained bite marks or red bumps on your skin;
- Black or dark red spots on bed linens, mattresses or box springs and;
- Cast off skins from nymphs or actual live or dead bed bugs.

If there are a lot of bed bugs, a musty or sweet odour may be present. Live bugs can be caught by placing double sided tape around the legs of a bed, or by setting bed legs into tins of oil and water.

HOW DO I PREVENT BED BUGS FROM ENTERING MY HOME?

The best approach for dealing with bed bugs is to take steps in order to avoid bringing them into your home. Bed bugs can enter a home when they are carried in on items such as luggage and mattresses. In an apartment or housing that has many attached units, bed bugs are free to move from one unit to another.

STEPS THAT CAN PREVENT BED BUGS FROM ENTERING A HOME INCLUDE:

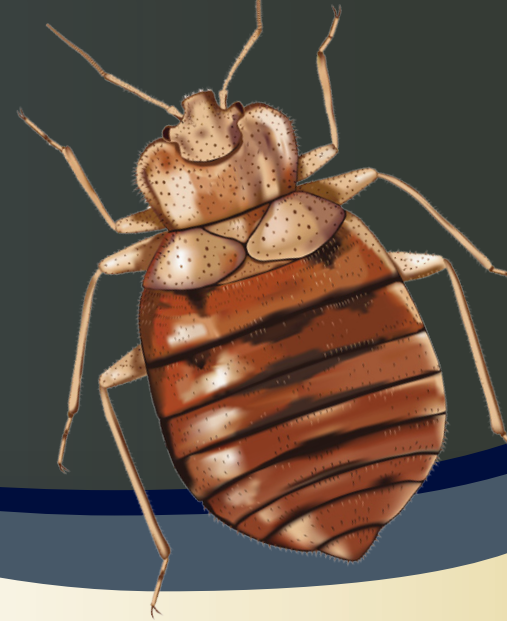
When purchasing second hand goods, check closely for bed bugs and eggs.

When travelling, take a good look at your room, especially the mattress, box spring and headboard.

Place your luggage on a luggage rack away from the bed, inside the bathtub or inside a plastic bag. When you return home, place your luggage in the freezer or outside in the winter to slow down any bed bugs. Freezing in the freezer works but mostly for smaller objects or clothing and will kill nymphs and adults over a period of time. This will also slow adults and/or nymphs in your luggage or clothes so that you can then put those items into the dryer to kill the bed bugs. Freezing is not an effective technique for killing eggs as the time period needed is far longer. Freezing is not an effective treatment for larger areas such as apartments or houses. Clean

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clothes from your luggage can be put in the dryer and dirty clothes washed with hot water and dried to inactivate any bed bugs that may be present. A normal dryer load run for at least 15 to 20 minutes on high heat should kill all stages of bed bugs. Empty luggage can be vacuumed, with the vacuum bag placed in the outside garbage when done.

HOW DO I GET RID OF BED BUGS?

Getting rid of bed bugs can be difficult for a homeowner. If you think you may have bed bugs, place double sided tape around your sleeping quarters. If bed bugs are found:

- Vacuum or steam clean floors and carpets.
- Clothing and bedding can be put in the dryer on high heat for at least 15 to 20 minutes. The more clothing and bedding you place in the load, the longer you need to leave it.
- A bed bug proof cover can be put over mattresses.
- Chemical sprays, dusts or powders which can be used in your home are available at retail stores. Read the label and follow the instructions to use the product.
- Many exterminators are now using heat treatment to kill bedbugs instead of or with chemical treatment. A professional exterminator will know how to use the different products and techniques available in order to get the best results, and should be approached for larger infestations and infestations that don't respond to the above treatments.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR BED BUG CONTROL?

If you live in a private dwelling, bed bug infestations are the home owner's responsibility.

If you live in a rented home, the landlord must take care of an infestation of bed bugs. In order to get rid of bed bugs, the landlord and tenant must work together. The landlord will arrange for an exterminator and tell the tenant when the exterminator is coming and how to prepare the rental unit for extermination. It is very important that tenants follow the landlord's instructions on how to prepare their unit before and after the treatment. Tenants must allow the exterminator into their rental unit to complete the extermination.

For instructions on how to prepare your apartment for spraying access the Manitoba Housing Information on Bed Bugs at www.gov.mb.ca/housing/pubs/pests/bedbugs.pdf.

LINKS:

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
www.wrha.mb.ca

City of Winnipeg:

www.winnipeg.ca/cms/bugline/insect_information/bedbugs.stm



Winnipeg Regional
Health Authority
Caring for Health

Office régional de la
santé de Winnipeg
À l'écoute de notre santé