

CINCINNATI HEALTH DEPARTMENT
SCHOOL AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH PROGRAM

**BED BUGS
INFORMATION SHEET**

What are bed bugs? They are:

- Wingless insects about 4-5 millimeters in size (resemble a tic or apple seed).
- Adult bed bugs are rust brown in color but change to a deep red after a blood meal.
- Fast runners with thin bodies that make them hard to detect as they hide in narrow cracks and crevices. They do not jump or fly.

How do I know if I have bed bugs?

- Bed bugs are fast moving and come out only at night to feed.
- The bite is painless and usually occurs when the person is asleep.
- The bed bugs hide during the day in cracks and crevices of bedding, mattress seams, bed frame (wood), and with severe infestations can move farther away to hide in baseboards, picture frames, dressers, window and door frames, carpeting, drapes, and floor boards.
- Signs of bedbugs are dark spots from their droppings on mattress edges or rusty/reddish spots of blood on the bed sheets.
- Bed bug bites cause inflamed and irritated skin, although people differ in their sensitivity.
- A small, hard, white welt can develop at the site of each bite along with severe itching that can last several hours to days.
- Unlike fleabites that mainly occur around the ankles, bed bugs bite on exposed areas of skin while sleeping like the face, neck, arms, shoulders, and hands.
- Rows of three or so welts on exposed skin are a sign of bed bugs. Bed bug welts do not have a red spot in the center such as with flea bites.
- Suspect bed bugs if person wakes up with itchy welts they didn't have when they went to sleep.
- Just because someone has bites on their skin, bed bugs are not automatically the cause. The bites can be mosquito or flea bites.
- The possibility of bed bugs is more likely if the affected person has been traveling or has obtained used beds or furnishings before the symptoms appeared.
(RECOMMENDATION: Used mattresses should be encased in plastic for one year such as a plastic zippered mattress cover)
- Confirmation of bed bugs requires finding and identifying the bugs themselves that often requires the help of a professional.

Can bed bugs make me sick?

- Bed bugs are not known to transmit disease and the amount of blood loss due to bed bug feeding does not cause problems for the host (the person).
- Scratching of welts can cause skin infections.
- It is best to consult with a physician before treating any rash or skin irritation.

- Antihistamines and corticosteroids may be prescribed to decrease allergic reactions and antibiotic ointment to prevent infection.

How can I get rid of bed bugs? (Be aware: It is extremely difficult to get rid of a bed bug infestation.)

- Bed bugs are extremely resilient and can survive a year without a blood meal.
- They also hide in tiny places, so inspections and treatments must be very thorough.
- In some cases, infested mattresses and box springs must be thrown away.
- Since bed bugs can easily spread throughout a building, it is essential to inspect adjoining rooms and apartments.
- Most effective pesticides can only be obtained through a certified pest control company.
- It is best to get the help of a professional pest control company.

Where do bed bugs come from?

- In the past decade bed bugs have made a comeback in the United States through international travel and less effective bug pesticides.
- Bedbugs are most commonly found in places with a high rate of turnover as in hotels, motels, dormitories, shelters and apartment complexes.
- Infestations usually are not a reflection of poor hygiene or poor housekeeping however, a cluttered home can contribute to the problem.

RESOURCES:

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/2000/2105.html>

<http://www.beyondpesticides.org/infoservices/pesticidesandyou/Winter06-07/bedbugs.pdf>

- For bed bug complaints you may call the Cincinnati Health Department: East side 352-2908 or West side 564-1751. You can also obtain “What you need to know about bed bugs” brochures from them.

**Although incidence of bed bugs in the United States is increasing,
Bed Bugs remain rare in comparison to most other household pests.**