

Bed Bugs



UHN

Patient information fact sheet

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small, flat insects about 4mm (1/4 inch) long. They are parasites that feed on the blood of humans and other mammals, usually during the night. After feeding, they turn dark red, are larger in size, and look like an apple seed. Bed bugs can live up to 1 year and lay hundreds of eggs.



Picture enlarged

Toronto Public Health

How do bed bugs move around?

Bed bugs can move up to 20 feet a day to feed. They do not move around on people, but travel on clothes, shoes, purses, luggage and furniture. If you live in an apartment, bed bugs can move between units along pipes, electrical wires and, through cracks and other openings.

Please visit the UHN Patient Education website for more health information:

www.uhnpatienteducation.ca

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If you have been close to someone who has bed bugs on their clothes or in their baggage, there is a chance that the bugs may have moved from that person and may now be found attached to your clothing, purse or other items.

I have been near someone who has bed bugs. What should I do?

If you have found out that you have been near someone who has bed bugs, you should:

1. Once home, remove all your clothes and wash them in the hottest water you can. Dry all items in the dryer at the highest setting for at least 20 minutes.
2. Put all your bags, backpacks, purse and any other items you had with you in a large plastic bag. Keep the bag in an isolated part of your garage or even outside.
3. Look for bed bugs or bed bug bites on your body. Though bed bugs do not move around on people's bodies, checking is still a good thing to do.
4. Look around your home for signs of bed bugs (see next part).

How would I know if there are bed bugs in my home?

Watch for these 5 Signs and symptoms of bed bugs

1) Bed bug bites:

- Both male and female bed bugs usually bite at night. Most times a person does not know that they have been bitten by a bed bug. You may think these bites are from a mosquito or another insect.
- When bed bugs bite, they leave their saliva in your skin. You may see:
 - A rash on your body after sleeping, mostly around the face, neck, chest, arms and hands.
 - This rash can look like:
 - 3 small bite marks in a row
 - Raised, red dots
 - Large, itchy red welts
 - People who are really sensitive to bed bug bites may find lumps filled with blood or fluid

2) Small reddish-brown stains or spots on your bed sheets or mattress.

- 3) **Bed bug droppings (small black dots or a trail of dots) on your sheets.**
- 4) **Bug shell casings or eggs. Bed bug eggs look pear-shaped, whitish in colour and may be in a group of 10 to 50 eggs.**
- 5) **If you have a large infestation (lots of bed bugs), you may smell a sweet smell in your home like raspberries, rotting raspberries, almonds or old, mouldy shoes.**

Where do bed bugs live?

- Bed bugs live in the seams and folds of mattresses and furniture, as well as on bed covers and cracks in the floors and walls.
- Bed bugs also hide between cushions on couches, in drawers, behind the baseboards, under rugs and edges of carpets, under chairs and beds, in the headboard of beds, in curtains, and in telephones, radios and clocks.

Check in all these places for live bugs, bug shell casings or their eggs.

What should I do if I have been bitten by bed bugs?

Most times, a bed bug bite will go away on its own without any special care. You should:

1. Keep the bite areas clean.
2. Try not to scratch. This can open the skin and cause an infection.
3. If the bites are really itchy, talk to your pharmacist about over-the-counter creams, or you may wish to talk to your family doctor about creams and medications that can help.
4. If you think your skin is infected (the bite area and skin around the bite are red, hot, swollen and painful), go to your family doctor.

Do bed bugs carry disease? Can I get sick from bed bug bites?

Even though bed bugs feed on human blood and the blood of other mammals and birds, there is no proof at this time that bed bugs pass on diseases carried by the blood between people.

Some people find that bed bug bites are very itchy. Scratching the bites may cause a skin infection that may need to be treated with antibiotic medication.

I have found bed bugs in my house. What should I do now?

First, make sure you really do have bed bugs. Call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600 or a pest control service.

The best way to deal with bed bugs is by using a professional pest control service. You can find a pest control service of your choosing in the telephone book yellow pages. They will talk to you about what they will do to get rid of the bed bugs in your home.

Here are some things you can do right now:

1. Look over your mattress and bed frame for bugs or eggs.
2. Using your vacuum and the thin nozzle or suction piece, vacuum all cracks, baseboards, bed frame, and all items close to your bed.
3. Remove all your bed sheets, blankets, pillow covers, dust ruffle etc. and wash everything in hot water. Then, place everything in the dryer on the hottest setting (usually the “cotton” setting) for 20 minutes.
4. Move your bed away from the wall and tuck in all your sheets to make sure that they are not touching the floor.
5. If possible, buy some caulking at your local hardware store. This is the “putty” used to seal around windows and doors, taps and sinks. Fill in any cracks between your baseboards, in your walls, and floors.
6. Use the caulking to seal around electrical boxes and telephone jacks, and where pipes and wires come into our home.
7. Remove and repair any loose wallpaper.
8. Tighten up any loose light switch covers.
9. Watch closely for more bed bugs. Set out some glue boards or sticky tape, such as carpet tape or duct tape to catch bed bugs on the move.
10. Look over any items you bring into your home for bed bugs.

Even, if you use a pest control service, you may see bed bugs alive for up to 10 days. This is normal. If you still see live bugs after 14 days, call the pest control service again.

Who can I call for more information or help?

Local Health Department

Toronto Public Health: 416-338-7600

Call 3-1-1 for information on how to call other health departments in the Toronto area.

Information on the Internet:

Toronto Public Health Bed bugs fact sheet

http://www.toronto.ca/health/pdf/bedbugs_factsheet.pdf

Health Canada

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/pest/_pnotes/bedbugs-punaises-lits/index-eng.php

National Institute of Health: Medline Plus

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/bedbugs.html>

Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/bedbugs/DS00663>

Pest Control:

Effective Control of Bed Bugs, Health Canada, Pest Management Regulatory Agency

http://www.pmr-arla.gc.ca/english/consum/bed_bugs-e.html#2

Adapted from Toronto Public Health Fact Sheet – Bed Bugs