Bed Bugs

Information for patients and families

This pamphlet has information about:

• What bed bugs are
• What to do if you get bed bugs
• Where to get more information
**What are bed bugs?**

Bed bugs are small, flat insects about 4 mm (¼ inch) long. They are parasites that feed on the blood of humans and other mammals, usually during the night. Bed bugs can live up to 1 year and lay hundreds of eggs.

After feeding they:
- turn dark red
- are larger in size
- look like an apple seed

**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. They 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.

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

What should I do?

1. When you go home, take off 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 a separate part of your garage or even outside. Call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600 for more information on how long to leave these items in bags.

3. Look for bed bugs or bed bug bites on your body. Bed bugs do not move around on people’s bodies, but checking is still a good thing to do.

4. Look around your home for signs of bed bugs.
How would I know if there are bed bugs in my home?

Watch for these 5 signs of bed bugs

1. **Bed bug bites.** Bed bugs usually bite at night. Most times a person doesn't know they have been bitten by a bed bug. You may think the bites are from a mosquito. 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 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.** They look pear-shaped. They are white and may be in a group of 10 to 50 eggs.

5. **If you have a lot 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?

- The seams and folds of mattresses and furniture.
- On bed covers
- 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 can talk to your family doctor about creams and medicines 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?

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. This can be treated with antibiotic medicine.
I 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 pest control service. You can find a pest control service in the telephone book or yellow pages online at www.yellowpages.ca. They'll talk to you about what how to get rid of bed bugs.

Here are some things you can do 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 phone 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 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 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.

For more information

Toronto Public Health Bed
Website: www.toronto.ca and search for “bed bugs”

Health Canada
Website: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca and search for “bed bugs”

National Institute of Health: Medline Plus
Website: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/bedbugs.html

Mayo Clinic
Website: http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/bedbugs/DS00663

Pest Control
Effective Control of Bed Bugs, Health Canada, Pest Management Regulatory Agency
http://www.pmra-arla.gc.ca/english/consum/bed_bugs-e.html#2

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