



# Central Michigan District Health Department

*Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities*



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## Bed Bugs

### What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are insects, more specifically “true bugs”. True bugs have piercing mouthparts that in most species are used for feeding on plants. However, some species of bugs will feed on animal tissues. Bed bugs have mouthparts, which are adapted to feed almost painlessly on the blood of people. Human-associated bed bugs found in the U.S, *Cimex lectularius*, have a flat, oval-shaped body with no wings, and are 4-7mm long. Their color is shiny reddish-brown but after a blood meal they become swollen and dark brown in color. There are three stages in the bed bug’s life cycle: egg nymph and adult. The eggs are white and about 1mm long. The nymphs look like adults with are smaller. Complete development from egg to adult takes from four weeks to several months, depending on temperature and the availability of food. Both male and female bed bugs feed on the blood of sleeping persons at night. In the absence of humans, they can feed on mice, rats, chickens, and other animals. Feeding takes about 10-15 minutes for adults, less for nymphs, and is repeated about every three days. Bed bug nymphs can survive for considerable periods (months) without feeding depending on environmental conditions.

### Can I get diseases from bed bugs?

There are currently no known cases of disease associated with bed bug bites. Most people are not aware that they have been bitten. Bed bug bites usually look like red bumps sometimes resembling mosquito bites, but people who are more sensitive to the bite can have localized allergic reactions. If that happens, check with your doctor, who might recommend an antihistamine or a topical cream to relieve any itching or burning. Scratching the bitten areas may lead to infection.

### Where can bed bugs be found?

They can be found in hotels, apartment complexes, and homes nationally. They can be carried indoors on objects such as furniture and clothing, or in luggage from a recent trip. Once inside, they are mostly found in the bedroom or place where people sleep such as:

- Seams, crease, tufts, and folds of mattresses and box springs
- Cracks in the bed frame and headboard
- Under chairs, couches, beds, dust covers
- Between the cushions of couches and chairs
- Under area rugs and the edges of carpets
- Between the folds of curtains
- In or under drawers or drawer rails
- Behind baseboards, and around window and door casings
- In cracks in plaster
- In telephones, radios, TVs, and clocks

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## What can I do if I have bed bugs in my home?

The best method to deal with bed bugs is Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which combines a variety of techniques and products that pose the least risk to human health and the environment.

1. The first step in any IMP is the identification of the pest to be managed.
  - Do not assume you have bed bugs because someone in the house has bites of an unidentified origin. Fleas can also be a problem when infestations reach high levels, and management considerations can differ. Consult with your health department, county MSU Extension office, or a licensed professional Pest Control Operator (PCO), to confirm that you have bed bugs.
  - Inspect your mattress, box spring and bed frame, particularly in the folds, crevices, underside, and other locations bed bugs like to hide, as outlined above. Pay particular attention for small, dark spots on sheets or the mattress. This may indicate locations where bed bugs have bitten and passed some of the blood meal.
2. Seal your mattress/pillows with a plastic or hypoallergenic, zippered cover. This will keep bed bugs out of the mattress, or eventually kill any bed bugs trapped within. Do NOT apply a pesticide to mattresses or to surfaces that would be in direct human contact, except when the pesticide label specifically states that the product can be applied in that manner. Pesticides can be harmful to people and pets. READ and UNDERSTAND the label.
3. Wash all your linens and place them in a hot dryer for 20 minutes. Also freezing (-5) for five days will work. Less time at lower temp.
  - \*\*\* It is not always necessary to discard bedding or mattresses\*\*\*
4. Use a nozzle attachment on a vacuum to capture the bed bugs and their eggs. Eggs may be difficult to vacuum as they are cemented to substrates, scraping may be necessary. Vacuum all crevices on your mattress, bed frame, baseboards and any objects close to the bed. It is essential to empty the vacuum immediately and properly dispose of the bag or contents by placing in a sealed plastic bag or container, or by placing sealed contents in the freezer (-5C) for five days.
5. Remove all unnecessary clutter, this provides harborage for bed bugs.
6. Seal cracks and crevices between baseboards, on wood bed frames, floors, and walls with caulking. Repair or remove peeling wallpaper, lighten loose light switch or outlet covers, and seal any openings where pipes, wires or other utilities come into your home (pay special attention to walls that are shared between apartments).
7. Monitor daily by setting out glue boards or sticky tape (carpet tape works well) to catch the bed bugs as they move from their harborage. Closely examine any items that you are bringing into your home. Note: Furniture put out by someone else for collection could be infested with bed bugs or other pests. Use caution.
8. Consult a licensed PCO to discuss options that pose the least risk to humans and the environment.