



# NORTHERN KENTUCKY INDEPENDENT DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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## Bed Bugs

What are bed bugs?	Bed bugs are small, flat insects, usually brown or reddish-brown in color. Bed bugs are typically about 1/4 of an inch long. Bed bugs do not fly, but can quickly move across floors, walls and other surfaces. They are typically active at night.
Where are bed bugs found?	<p>Bed bugs are typically found in luggage, clothing, bedding and furniture. They can live in almost any crevice or protected location.</p> <p>Bed bug infestations are common in places where people come and go frequently, such as hotels, motels, dormitories, shelters, apartment complexes and prisons.</p> <p>Unlike many other pests, bed bugs are not prevented by clean conditions, and can be found in places that are frequently and thoroughly cleaned.</p> <p>Locally, bed bugs have been found in some of hotels, apartment units, single family homes, libraries, workplaces, etc. The potential exists for them to be transported to almost any public building, vehicle or work site.</p>
How do I know if a place or item is infested with bed bugs?	<p>Bed bugs typically infest mattresses, box springs, bed frames and couches. These areas usually have dark spots and stains from the dried excrement of the bed bugs.</p> <p>Another sign of bed bugs is rusty or red spots of blood on bed sheets, mattresses or walls.</p> <p>Heavy bed bug infestations may also have a musty smell.</p>
What do bedbugs do to humans?	<p>Bed bugs require blood to survive. To get this nourishment, they often feed on humans. Bed bugs usually bite people at night when they are sleeping, and feed on any area of exposed skin, such as the face, neck, shoulders, arms or hands. The amount of blood lost by humans to bed bugs is minimal.</p> <p>The bites do not hurt, so the person usually does not know that he/she has been bitten, but bed bug bites do irritate the skin. People with bed bug bites may develop a small, hard, swollen white welt at the site of the bite. The welts are accompanied by severe itching that usually lasts a couple of days.</p> <p>Anxiety and restlessness are also common in people who have bed bug bites.</p>
Do bed bugs spread disease?	<p>Bed bugs do not appear to transmit diseases. The greatest threat from the bites in humans is the swelling and inflammation at the site of the bites, which can lead to secondary bacterial skin infections.</p> <p>The bites can be treated with antihistamines or over-the-counter cortisone creams. Check with your health care provider to determine which treatments you should use.</p>
How do I know if I've been bitten by bed bugs?	Not all bites or bite-like scratches are due to bed bugs. If you wake up with itchy bites that you did not have when you went to sleep, then you may have bed bugs. To confirm if the bugs are present, a professional will most likely have to identify them.

<p>How are bed bugs spread?</p>	<p>Bed bugs attach to luggage, clothing, beds and furniture, and move when and where those objects are moved. Bed bug outbreaks can most often be traced to travel.</p> <p>Use of secondhand furniture, particularly beds and couches is another way bed bugs can be spread. You should be very careful when purchasing or receiving used beds and couches, and should avoid all furniture left sitting at the curb.</p>
<p>How can I keep from getting bed bugs?</p>	<p>Once bed bugs have infested an area, treatment by a professional exterminator is necessary.</p> <p>However, you can prevent bed bug infestation in the first place by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching for the signs of bed bugs when you travel by examining the bed sheets and upper and lower level of the mattress for signs of bed bugs and then sleeping elsewhere if you suspect infestation</li> <li>• Making sure to keep your suitcase off of the floor when traveling</li> <li>• Not using secondhand beds, mattresses, box springs, couches and furniture, particularly if you don't know where it came from</li> <li>• Not taking items like purses or jackets into movie theaters, libraries or similar places where bed bugs might be in the seats. Check yourself as best as possible before getting in the car or going into your home afterwards.</li> <li>• Regularly checking your child's backpack, blankets, clothing, school books and related items if they are taken to school or child care.</li> <li>• Regularly inspecting your family's mattresses, bedding and rooms in general to be on the look out for bed bugs. It's better to catch them early than to deal with a full blown infestation.</li> <li>• Keeping in mind that bed bugs might also be in your neighbor's home. People or things coming into your residence is the most common source of infestation.</li> <li>• If you live in an apartment or condo, bed bugs can travel between walls, floors and ceilings and therefore can move from one unit into others. Work closely with landlords to be on the look out for signs of infestations.</li> </ul>
<p>I think I may have been exposed to bed bugs in a public place and want to keep them out of my house. What should I do?</p>	<p>Take any clothing or items that you think have bed bugs off before entering your house. Put them in a plastic bag and then immediately wash the items in the washing machine and run them through the dryer on the hot cycle—at least 120 degrees or higher.</p> <p>This will kill bed bug eggs and the bugs themselves. If needed, you can first place items directly into the dryer to kill the bugs—especially for items such as backpacks and duffel bags and such.</p> <p>While the weather is hot outside, you can also place suspected items in a black plastic bag, seal it shut, then allow to sit in direct sunlight for a day or two. If done during hot sunny weather, the temperature in the bag should reach 120 or higher.</p>
<p>If bed bugs have infested part of my house, how do I get rid of them?</p>	<p>Once bed bugs have infested an area, treatment by a professional exterminator is necessary. The exterminator may use a combination of insecticides to kill off the bed bugs. The insecticides are applied to all areas where the bed bugs are discovered, or where they tend to crawl or hide.</p> <p>In many cases, multiple applications are necessary to completely rid the</p>

	<p>infested area of bed bugs. In apartments and hotels, nearby units may need to be treated as well.</p> <p>Furniture and related items, as well as heavily infested bedding or clothing, may need to be thrown out.</p>
<p>I thought bed bugs weren't a problem in the U.S. Why are they a concern?</p>	<p>Bed bug infestation was common in the U.S. prior to World War II, but the use of DDT (a chemical insecticide) in the 1940's and 1950's caused bed bugs to all but vanish from the U.S. Because of safety concerns, DDT is no longer used for pest control, and many people use baits to control ants and cockroaches—these baits are not effective on bed bugs.</p> <p>An increase of international travel, particularly to areas of the world where bed bugs have remained prevalent has also lead to an increased prevalence of bed bugs in the U.S. However, bed bugs are still rare when compared to other household pests.</p>
<p>Can the Health Department do anything to make someone get rid of bed bugs?</p>	<p>The Health Department does not have the authority to require bed bugs to be removed from private residences, such as homes and apartments.</p> <p>In public buildings, the Health Department only has the authority to act if the facility is inspected for another reason—for example, a hotel room or a restaurant.</p>
<p>Where can I get more information on bed bugs?</p>	<p>For more information online, visit the</p> <p><a href="#">University of Kentucky's Department of Entomology</a></p> <p><a href="#">Ohio State University Extension Office</a></p> <p>Or you can call the Health Department's Environmental Health and Safety office at 859.341.4151.</p>