

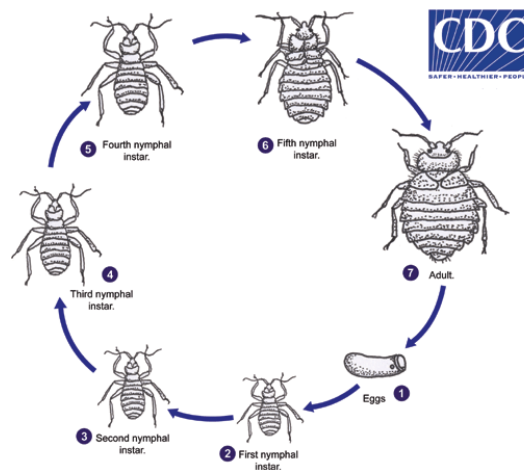
Bed Bugs

EPIC Fact Sheet

Bed Bugs in Skilled Nursing Facilities

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are small, flat, parasitic insects that feed solely on the blood of people and animals while they sleep. Bed bugs are reddish-brown in color, wingless, range from 1mm to 7mm (roughly the size of Lincoln's head on a penny), and can live several months without a blood meal.



Bed bugs are found across the globe from North and South America, to Africa, Asia and Europe. They have been found in five-star hotels, hospitals and resorts and their presence is not determined by the cleanliness of the living conditions where they are found. Bed bug infestations usually occur around or near the areas where people sleep or spend extended time immobile, such as couches, lounge chairs and wheelchairs. They hide during the day in places such as seams of mattresses, box springs, bed frames, headboards, dresser tables, inside cracks or crevices, behind wallpaper, or any other clutter or objects around a bed. Bed bugs have been shown to be able to travel over 100 feet in a night but tend to live within 8 feet of where people sleep.

Bed bug bites usually do not pose a serious medical threat. Bed bugs are not known to spread disease. However, bed bugs can be an annoyance because their presence may cause itching and loss of sleep. Sometimes the itching can lead to excessive scratching, which increases the chance of a secondary skin infection. The best way to treat a bite is to avoid scratching the area and apply antiseptic creams or lotions and take an antihistamine.

The Disaster Ready Emergency Preparedness Infection Control (DR EPIC) program provides education and technical assistance for skilled nursing providers throughout the state. Individual providers will need to exercise their independent discretion in how to apply this information and technical assistance to the unique operation of each facility. For that reason, a facility's exercise of its professional judgment and due diligence in utilizing the program for infection control and risk management practices is solely within the facility's control for which it is entirely responsible.

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What are the signs and symptoms of a bed bug infestation?

One of the easiest ways to identify a bed bug infestation is by the tell-tale bite marks on the face, neck, arms, hands, or any other body parts while sleeping. However, these bite marks may take as long as 14 days to develop in some people, so it is important to look for other clues when determining if bed bugs have infested an area. These signs include:

- the bed bugs' exoskeletons after molting,
- bed bugs in the fold of mattresses and sheets,
- rusty-colored blood spots due to their blood-filled fecal material they excrete onto the mattress or nearby furniture, and
- a sweet musty odor.

When visual detection proves difficult or impractical, there are also service animals specially trained to detect bed bugs. These service animals have been used to screen entire facilities or to conduct clearance inspections for areas treated for bed bugs.

How do people get bed bugs?

Bed bugs are experts at hiding. Their slim flat bodies allow them to fit into the smallest of spaces and stay there for long periods of time, even without a blood meal. Bed bugs are usually transported from place to place as people travel. The bed bugs travel in the seams and folds of luggage, overnight bags, folded clothes, bedding, furniture, and anywhere else where they can hide. Most people do not realize they are transporting stow-away bed bugs as they travel from location to location, infecting areas as they travel.

Everyone is at risk for getting bed bugs when visiting an infected area. However, anyone who travels frequently and shares living and sleeping quarters where other people have previously slept has a higher risk of being bitten and or spreading a bed bug infestation. Communal living setting, such as long term healthcare facilities, dormitories, prisons and the like are at particular risk.

How are bed bugs treated and prevented?

Early detection of bedbug signs is critical to preventing infestation and spread. The best way to prevent bed bugs is regular monitoring for the signs of an infestation. In addition to performing visual inspections, sticky-traps can be helpful as monitoring tools.

If a resident of a skilled nursing facility is known to have bed bugs, it is important to treat the room, adjacent rooms (above, below and beside), all of the contents and personal effects (including the wheelchair and any clothes the resident is wearing). Expect that the dining location and recreating areas that the resident frequented are likely impacted.

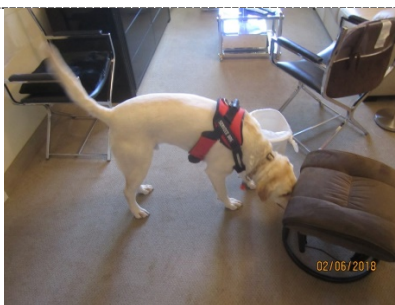
Treating an infestation typically requires professional equipment and methods. Sealing cracks and crevices, including small entrances to wall cavities is an essential step, as bedbugs can escape exposure to treatments as

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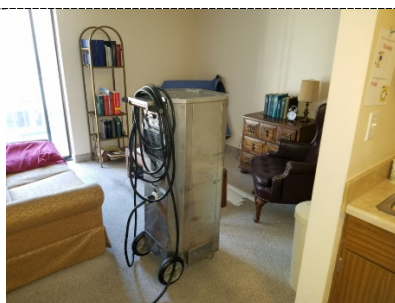
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they reside within the wall cavities. Bed bug infestations are commonly treated with targeted insecticides, insect growth regulators (IGR), desiccants, and / or heat or cold treatment. General purpose insecticides, including “foggers”, are not effective.

The gestation period for a bed bug egg is around 10 days, so multiple pesticide treatments may be needed to address nymphs born post treatment. Heat can destroy adults, nymphs and eggs, but requires careful consideration and protection of contents, structure, pets and fire life and safety systems in treatment areas. A licensed, insured, experienced pest control company should be consulted.



Example of Trained Service Dog used in Bed Bug Detection (Photo by Clark Seif Clark, Inc.)



Example of Heat Treatment Equipment used to Treat Bed Bugs
(Photo by Clark Seif Clark, Inc.)

Resources to Learn More:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/bedbugs/index.html>
- <https://www.epa.gov/bedbugs>
- [National Pest Management Association Best Practices Website:](#)
- Additional EPIC resources
 - If you have additional questions:
 - Send an email to the Emergency Preparedness Infection Control (EPIC) at EPIC@AZHCA.org, or leave a message at 602-241-4644
 - Visit the EPIC Web Resource Pages at www.epic.disasterreadyaz.org

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