



## Bed Bugs Fact Sheet Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Because of changes in modern pest control practices, travel and immigration, bed bugs are increasingly becoming a problem in residences of all kinds, including homes, apartments, hotels, cruise ships, dormitories and shelters.

### What are Bed Bugs?

Bed bugs are small, brown insects that feed on human and animal blood. Adult bed bugs are  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch long with reddish-brown, oval, flat bodies. They are active at night and during the day, hide in tiny crevices in mattresses, box springs, bed frames, furniture, floors, or walls. They can be seen and are sometimes mistaken for ticks.



### Are Bed Bugs Harmful?

Although a nuisance, bed bugs are not known to spread disease. Many people develop an itchy, skin welt a day after the bite. The medical concern is usually limited to itching and inflammation of the welts. Infestations may cause anxiety and loss of sleep. If badly affected, seek medical care promptly.

### How Does a Bed Bug Infestation Occur?

Bed bugs are usually carried into the home unknowingly. People carry them on luggage, clothing, beds, and furniture, especially used beds and sofas. Once inside the home, they spread from room to room. They can live for months without food or water.

### How Do I Know If My Home Is Infested?

You may notice itchy skin welts on any exposed skin area including the face, neck, shoulders, arms and legs. You may also see the bed bugs, small bloodstains on bedding, or dark spots from their droppings.

### How Do I Get Rid of Bed Bugs?

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene recommends treatment provided by a licensed pest control business. Ask to see the Pesticide Business License or check directly with the Maryland Department of Agriculture at <http://www.kellysolutions.com/md/Business/searchbyconame.asp>. The company should:

- Inspect your home to confirm the presence of bed bugs;
- Find and eliminate the bed bugs hiding places;
- Use mattress encasements that prevent Bed Bugs from getting into the mattress;
- If necessary, treat your home with special cleaning or pesticides;
- Make return visits to confirm that the bed bugs are gone.

Before treatment reduce clutter. Launder infested bedding and garments at 120° F or heat in a clothes dryer for several minutes. Clean and vacuum the infested areas. Discard the vacuum contents and cleaning items in a sealed trash bag.

Talk with the pest control professional about safe use of pesticides. Make sure the pest control professional uses the least toxic pesticide(s), follows product warnings, only treats mattress and upholstered furniture seams (Pesticides should never be sprayed on top of a mattress or sofa), and tells you when it is safe to return to or use a treated area.

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University of Kentucky College of Agriculture; Retrieved January 7, 2008 at <http://www.ca.uky.edu/entomology/entfacts/ef636.asp>

Bed Bug Fact Sheet: Vector Surveillance and Control: NYC DOHMH; Retrieved January 7, 2008 at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/vector/vector-faq1.shtml>

Harvard University Bed Bug Information; Retrieved January 7, 2008 at [http://www.uos.harvard.edu/ehs/pes\\_bedbug.shtml](http://www.uos.harvard.edu/ehs/pes_bedbug.shtml)