

Bed bug factsheet



What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small, wingless insects that are as long as 1 cm (3/8 inch) and resemble an apple seed (). They have an oval body and a short, wide head. Adult bed bugs are brown and as flat as a debit card when they have not fed. After feeding, bed bugs fatten up and become a dark red colour. Bed bugs cannot fly or jump.

Young bed bugs are shaped like adult bed bugs but are smaller (1.5 mm; 1/16 inch) and lighter in colour. Bed bug eggs are small (1 mm; 1/16 inch), oval shaped, and cream in colour.

Bed bug bites

There is no evidence that bed bugs transmit diseases. Bed bugs feed on the blood of people and animals while they sleep, so they may bite a person without being seen. Bed bugs will bite anywhere on the body, but often bite around the face, neck, arms, legs, and chest of humans.

A bed bug bite can take as long as 14 days to appear. Bed bug bites often appear as a red spot with a small bump; sometimes they develop into larger red welts. The itchiness of bed bug bites can be treated with calamine, hydrocortisone cream, or ice. Most bites go away without medical treatment.

Some people do not react to bed bug bites, while others may have minor skin reactions. In rare cases, some people may have allergic reactions to bed bug bites or experience an infection due to excessive scratching.

Where do bed bugs live?

Bed bugs prefer to live in locations where they can hide easily and feed regularly — usually around a bed. Their flat bodies allow them to hide in the seams or folds of a mattress or box spring, behind loose wallpaper, or around baseboards and window or door mouldings.

What if I have bed bugs?

Contact your housing agency immediately. Do not use insecticides, such as bug-bombs or phosphine tablets. These chemicals may spread bed bugs to other rooms in your unit or other units in the building. These chemicals are also a health risk and may lead to serious illness or death.

Bed bugs are common in Saskatchewan and not the result of poor housekeeping. If you have bed bugs, do not be embarrassed. Ask your housing agency for help.



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