

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small wingless insects that feed on the blood of people and animals, usually while they sleep. Adult bed bugs are about 1cm (3/8in) long 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 bloat and become a dark red colour. Young bed bugs are shaped like adult bed bugs but are smaller (1.5 mm; 1/16 inch long) and lighter in colour.

Bed bugs are drawn by human pheromones and body heat and the carbon dioxide exhaled as people sleep. They move between objects in a room, from room to room in a unit, or between units in a building. Bed bugs move at about the same speed as an ant. They cannot fly or jump and cannot easily climb metal, very smooth, or polished surfaces.

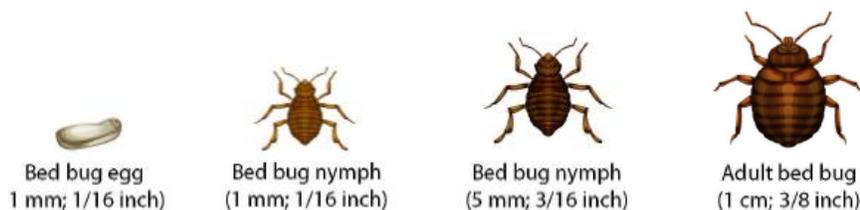
Like ants or any other kind of insect that may get into one's home, bed bugs are a nuisance. They are not a threat to the health of humans and there is no evidence that they spread disease. Like other pests, bed bugs can be professionally treated.

The Lifecycle of a bed bug

Bed bugs go through three life stages: egg, nymph, and adult.

The female bed bug lays at least 500 eggs in her lifetime at a rate of about two to four eggs per day. Bed bug eggs are white, 1mm (1/16 inch) long, and are difficult to see on many surfaces. The eggs have a sticky coating and are laid in cracks and crevices, behind woodwork, or in other hidden locations. Bed bug eggs usually hatch in 6 to 17 days.

Young bed bugs (or nymphs) go through five stages before they reach the mature adult stage. When bed bugs hatch, they are about the size of a poppy seed. As they grow, they shed their skins, which are transparent and orange-coloured. Each growth stage lasts about a week, depending on the room temperature and the availability of food. The lifecycle from nymph to adulthood takes about two months. Adult bed bugs usually live for about 10 or more months in a suitable environment with appropriate temperatures (21 to 28 C) and blood to feed on; they may be dormant for up to two years without feeding.



Where bed bugs live

Bed bugs leave their hiding places to feed on people who are sleeping; this usually occurs at night but may occur during the day if that is when a person sleeps. Bed bugs prefer to live in locations where they can hide easily and feed regularly – usually around a bed. Bed bugs will typically only travel to other rooms when there is a large infestation. Bed bugs will travel 1 and 6 meters (3 to 20 feet) for a feeding. The vast majority of bed bugs will be found in the below locations:

- Under the box spring, usually at the head of the bed and in the corners where the material is stapled to the wood frame; you may need to remove the dust cover to find evidence of bed bugs'
- In the top and bottom seams of the mattress;
- Around the headboard, especially behind the headboard where the wood is joined;
- In the couch; and
- Behind the baseboards of a bedroom or the baseboards near a couch.

What are the signs of a bed bugs?

Evidence of bed bugs should be easy to find if they are present in a unit. Below are common signs of bed bugs;

- **Live or dead bed bugs**, which may be found in any of the locations listed above.
- **Bed bug droppings** are dark spots of digested blood. These droppings, or "blood spotting," may be on bed sheets; the seams of mattresses; furniture; or any other places bed bugs hide. They will smear when you run a wet finger over them.
- **The skins of bed bugs** that shed after each growth stage; these clear, orange-colored skins can be found where bed bugs hide, such as along the seams of mattresses or box springs.
- **Bed bug eggs** are cream in colour and with a slight bend. They are about 1mm (1/16 inch) long and are typically laid in crevices in dark areas, such as under a headboard or box spring.
- **A sweet smell** may be evident in extreme bed bug infestations



Left: a bed bug that has not fed; its body is flatter and wider than the bed bug on the right that has fed.

Adult bed bugs are 1 cm (3/8 inch) long.