



MIDDLESEX COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FACT SHEET

Bed Bugs

What are bed bugs?

- Bed bugs are insects that feed on humans and other warm-blooded animals.
- These insects are wingless, reddish-brown in color and as adults are about one fourth ($\frac{1}{4}$) of an inch in length.
- Bed bugs appear oval and flattened from top to bottom.
- Immature bed bugs (nymphs) are usually lighter in color but otherwise resemble adults.

Where are bed bugs found?

- Bed bugs are most frequently found in dwellings with a high rate of occupant turnover, such as hotels, motels, hostels, dormitories, shelters, apartment complexes, rooming houses and prisons.
- Adult bed bugs are normally found hiding in cracks and crevices near sleeping areas during the day and come out at night to feed.
- Bed bugs can initially be found about the tufts, seams and folds of mattresses.
- Bed bug eggs are normally found in cracks and crevices and behind loose wallpaper.

What are signs of bed bug infestation?

Signs of bed bug infestations may include:

- Blood-stained sheets and bedding.
- Dark colored excrement spots on areas where they hide during the day.
- Heavily infested areas have a "musty" odor similar to that of large cockroach infestations.

A female bed bug may lay 200-500 eggs during her life time, usually in batches of 10-50 eggs.
An infestation of bed bugs does not necessarily mean your dwelling is not clean and/or sanitary.

How are bed bugs spread?

- Bed bug infestations are spread by contact with infested persons or use of infested sleeping areas.
- International travel is thought to aid the spread because eggs, nymphs and adult bed bugs are transported in luggage, clothing, bedding and furniture.

How do you control bed bug infestation?

- Control is best achieved through sound sanitation practices such as:
 - Frequent vacuuming of mattresses and dwelling. (After vacuuming immediately place the vacuum cleaner bag in a plastic bag, seal tightly and discard properly in a garbage container outside of the dwelling.)
 - Laundering of bedding and clothing in hot water.
 - Cleaning and sanitizing dwelling.
- Mattress and box springs can be permanently encased within special mattress bags.
- To prevent bed bugs from crawling onto a bed, pull the bed frame away from the wall, then tuck in sheets and blankets so they do not contact the floor.
- Repair cracks in plaster and glue down loosened wall paper.

Can bed bug bites cause disease?

- Bed bugs have never been shown to transmit disease.
- Bites appear as small, whitish, hardened areas surrounded by a larger swollen area.
- Constant scratching of these bites may result in secondary infection.
- Persons should consult a physician if they think they may have been bitten by bedbugs.

Pesticide Reminder:

- If you use pesticides read and follow all directions on the label before using.
- Remember that pesticides are poisonous and should always be used and stored properly and as per the manufacturers' recommendations.
- It is strongly recommended that treatments for bed bug infestations be conducted by a licensed New Jersey pesticide applicator.

Photos:



(Actual size)
Adult Bed Bug next to a penny



(Magnified)
Adult Bed Bug feeding on a human. (M. Potter, Univ. of Kentucky)

Sources of information:

- Rutgers The State University of New Jersey – Pesticide Applicator Training Manual, Category 8A, General Public Health Pest Control, 1988, pages 43-45.
- The Ohio State University Extension – Fact Sheet Bed Bugs, HYG-2105-04 <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/2000/2105.html>
- University of Kentucky Entomology - <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Entomology/entfacts/struct/ef636.htm>
- Pennsylvania State University, Department of Entomology, Bed Bugs fact sheet, 2003
- Harvard School of Public Health - <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/bedbugs/>