

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN  
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

[oakgov.com/health](http://oakgov.com/health)

## Bed Bugs

### What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small brownish insects that feed on human blood. They are usually active at night when people are sleeping. Adult bed bugs are about the size of an apple seed, and have a flat, oval-shaped body with no wings. After a blood meal they become swollen and reddish brown in color.

### What does a bed bug bite feel and look like?

Bed bug bites usually look like little red bumps similar to a mosquito bite. Unlike flea bites, they do not have a red spot in the center. The bites are usually grouped together in a straight line or cluster. Exposed areas of the arms, legs and back are more prone to bed bug bites.

### Can I get sick from bed bugs bites?

Bed bugs are not known to transmit any human disease. Some people have no reaction but other people may have irritating, itchy allergic reactions.

### What is the treatment for bed bug bites?

If you have an allergic reaction check to bed bug bites, check with your doctor who may suggest using an antihistamine or topical cream to prevent itching. If not treated, itching can lead to infection of the bites.

### How do I know if my home is infested with bed bugs?

If you have bites you can't explain, bed bugs may be the cause. They try to live as close to their food source as possible. Bed bugs often live directly on the mattress, in the tufts and folds, along the seam, and even inside the mattress. They may also be found in the box-spring, on the bed frame, headboard and furniture near the bed. They will leave "blood spots" and cast skins on sheets, pillows, or mattress seams. Bed bugs may also hide in: cracks and crevices of furniture or wood floors; under chair or couch cushions; under area rugs; between the folds of curtains; in or under drawers; behind baseboards and around window casings; behind electrical plates and loose wallpaper; in cracks in plaster; or in telephones, radios, and clocks.

### How do bed bugs get into my home?

Bed bugs often enter the home on objects such as furniture and clothing, or in luggage from a recent trip. Once in the home they are mostly found in areas where people sleep but can travel to other rooms or apartments along pipes, electrical wiring and other openings.

### How can I prevent bed bugs from getting into my home?

- Vacuum floors and mattresses regularly.
- Do not bring used mattresses, box springs, bed frames or upholstered furniture into your home because it is hard to see if bed bugs or their eggs are present.
- Other used furniture should be carefully inspected and scrubbed with soapy water or household cleaner to remove any possible bed bugs or their eggs.
- Place second-hand clothing in a sealed, plastic bag and empty directly into the washing machine. Wash in hot water and dry on a hot setting to kill bed bugs and their eggs.

## How can I avoid bringing bed bugs home when I travel?

When staying away from home, inspect the room for signs of bed bugs prior to unpacking your luggage. In addition:

- Hang clothes in the closet farthest from the bed.
- Place luggage on the folding luggage rack most hotels provide.
- Place empty luggage in a dry cleaning bag or plastic bag and tie the ends shut until ready to re-pack.
- Check clothing and luggage for signs of bed bugs before departing for home.

## What can I do if I have bed bugs in my home?

The best way to deal with bed bugs is Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which combines a variety of techniques and products that pose the least risk to humans and the environment.

- The first step is to confirm a bed bug problem. Use a bright flashlight to inspect mattresses, sheets, and pillows for signs of bed bugs or the blood spots they may leave behind after feeding.
- If there are signs that bed bugs are present use a nozzle attachment on a vacuum to capture the bed bugs and their eggs. Scraping may be necessary because eggs often stick to the surface. Vacuum all crevices on the mattress, box spring, bed frame and the area around the bed. Immediately dispose of the vacuum bag or contents by placing in a sealed plastic bag or container and removing from the house.
- After careful vacuuming, seal an infected mattress, box spring or pillow with a plastic or hypoallergenic, zippered cover for one year to kill any remaining adult bed bugs or eggs.
- Remove clutter because it provides hiding places for bed bugs.
- Wash all linens in hot soapy water and dry in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes.
- Chemical treatments may be part of an IPM plan. DO NOT apply any pesticide to a surface that may be in contact with humans. Call a licensed, pest control operator if you choose to treat the infestation with a pesticide. A list of licensed pest control operators is available from the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA).

## For more information on bed bugs contact:

### **Oakland County Health Division**

Environmental Health Services

[www.oakgov.com/health/program\\_service/eh\\_index.html](http://www.oakgov.com/health/program_service/eh_index.html)

### **State of Michigan**

Michigan Department of Community Health-Emerging Diseases website

[www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,1607,7-186--147759--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,1607,7-186--147759--,00.html)

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