

Bed Bugs

What are bed bugs?

- Bed bugs are small, reddish-brown in color, wingless, flat, parasitic insects that feed on the blood of people and animals while they sleep.
- They can live up to a year without a blood meal.



Do bed bugs spread disease?

- Bed bugs are not known to spread disease.
- Bed bugs are an annoyance because their bites may cause itching and loss of sleep.
- They are a pest of public health importance, like head lice.

What are the symptoms of bed bug bites?

- While sleeping, bite marks on the face, neck, arms, hands, or any body part appear up to 14 days later.
- Other bed bug symptoms include insomnia, anxiety, and skin problems.
- Bites may cause an allergic reaction or excessive scratching that may lead to a secondary skin infection.
- Allergic symptoms may include enlarged bite marks, painful swelling at the bite site, and rarely anaphylaxis.
- Avoid scratching the bites, apply antiseptic creams or lotions to them, and take an antihistamine.



What are the signs of a bed bug infestation?

- Infestation signs include:
 - Itchy areas you did not have when you went to sleep
 - Bed bugs, exoskeletons after molting, in the fold of mattresses and sheets
 - Rust-colored fecal material on the mattress, nearby furniture, pajamas, and walls
 - Sweet-musty odor from bugs' scent gland



Why have bed bugs become a problem?

- There is a lack of understanding about the history and biology between humans, bed bugs, and pesticides.
- An increase in international travel allows bed bugs to travel in luggage globally quickly.
- Bed bugs have developed a resistance to current pesticides.



How can I prevent getting bed bugs?

- The best way to prevent bed bugs is regular inspection for the signs of an infestation.
- When you travel and stay at a hotel, do not put your luggage on the bed. Use luggage racks to hold your luggage when packing or unpacking rather than setting your luggage on the bed or floor.
- Check the mattress and headboard for signs of bed bugs before sleeping.
- Upon returning home, unpack directly into a washing machine and inspect your luggage carefully.

How do I treat bed bugs?

- The most effective way to control bed bugs is a coordinated effort among resident, property managers, and pest management professionals.
- Residents:
 - Clean bedding, linens, curtains, and clothing in hot water and dry them on highest dryer setting
 - Use a stiff brush to remove from mattress seams
 - Vacuum bed and surrounding area frequently
 - Immediately remove vacuum bag and place in garbage outside
 - Encase mattress and box springs with tight-woven zippered cover for at least a year
 - Seal cracks and crevices to remove hiding places
 - Remove clutter where bed bugs can hide
- Property managers and pest management professionals may use a variety of surveillance and control methods:
 - Monitoring devices, like sticky traps
 - Heat treatments
 - Non-chemical pesticides, like diatomaceous earth
 - Pesticides labeled for bed bug control
- Over-the-counter or homemade pest control treatments are not recommended because they are ineffective or may be dangerous to people and cause the bed bugs to become resistant to pesticides.

What does the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) do about bed bug complaints?

- ADPH, Bureau of Environmental Services (BES), will send an environmentalist to investigate a complaint in public lodging facilities only. If bedbugs are found, the lodging area will be closed until properly treated and the bedbugs are eliminated.
- For all other complaints, the best treatment is to contact a pest management professional.

Where can I find more information?

- Go to cdc.gov or epa.gov and type Bed Bug in SEARCH box.

