

Know the FACTS

Bedbugs

Bedbugs are small, flat, reddish-brown, wingless insects that feed on people and animals. They can live for months without a meal, waiting until a prime opportunity arises. Bedbugs can be found in any home or public space, regardless of cleanliness, and removing them can be costly and difficult.

Recognizing and treating bedbug bites

Bedbug bites do not spread disease to humans but can cause irritation, insomnia, anxiety and intense scratching, which may lead to skin infections. Bite marks may appear on a person's face, neck, arms or hands up to 14 days after sleeping in an infested area.

Bitten skin may have no visible marks, small red bites in a line or random pattern, or even a rare but serious allergic response such as painful swelling or anaphylaxis. **Anyone experiencing an allergic reaction should contact a healthcare provider.**

The best way to treat a bite is to apply an antiseptic cream or lotion that reduces itching. Avoid scratching, which can lead to infection. Consult a doctor if signs of infection develop.



How to look for bedbugs

Bedbugs are primarily nocturnal, and **infestations usually happen in or near areas where people sleep.** This includes houses, apartments, hotels, shelters, cruise ships, buses, trains and dorm rooms.

Any sleeping space may become infested, despite how clean the space may be. Female bedbugs lay one to three eggs per day, so the problem can multiply quickly.

Bedbugs can travel up to 100 feet in one night. During the day, they often hide in:

- mattress seams
- box springs
- bed frames and headboards
- nightstands and dressers
- cracks or crevices
- wallpaper

In addition to skin bites, signs of bedbug infestation include:

- live bedbugs
- eggs and exoskeletons
- rust-colored stains or black spots on sheets or furniture, indicating blood or feces
- a sweaty, musty odor

How to prevent bedbugs

Preventing bedbugs can be challenging, but these steps can help reduce your risk:

- **Reduce clutter** to eliminate hiding places, especially near furniture.
- **Regularly wash bedding and clothing** in hot water (120°F) and dry on high heat for at least 30 minutes.
- **Thoroughly inspect** clothing, luggage and used or new furniture before bringing these items into your home.
- **Steam-clean** infested mattresses and soft furniture, concentrating on seams.
- **Pull beds away from walls** and use zippered mattress and box spring covers.
- After traveling, **check and clean your luggage**, and wash and dry your travel clothing on high heat.
- **Vacuum regularly** and dispose of vacuum contents in a sealed bag in an outdoor trash bin.
- **Contact a licensed pest control professional** if you suspect an infestation.

Guidance for handling bedbugs in schools

If you find bedbugs in a classroom or on a student, **respond calmly and discreetly**. Focus on inspecting belongings, limiting the spread, cleaning affected areas and communicating with parents. In accordance with Ohio law, only licensed pest control professionals may apply pesticides in school buildings.

- Discreetly **inspect the area** and any student belongings.
- **Seal affected items** like backpacks and jackets in a plastic bag to send home.
- **Remove visible bugs** using gloves or tissue and dispose of them in a sealed bag.
- **Vacuum affected areas** after school. Seal and dispose of the vacuum contents.
- **Notify parents or guardians** and provide prevention guidance.
- **Contact a licensed pest control professional** if treatment is needed.



Guidance for social workers and home healthcare workers

When visiting a home where bedbugs may be present, take steps to protect yourself and prevent spreading them to other locations.

- **Prepare before visits.** Bring a folding chair, shoe covers or rubber boots, gloves, large white garbage bags, sealable plastic bags, a small waist pack for essential items and an extra set of clothes or disposable garment covers.
- **Limit what you bring inside.** Avoid large bags, keep essential items sealed in a plastic bag and use a waist pack when possible.
- **Protect yourself inside the home.** Wear light-colored clothing to easily spot bedbugs crawling on you. Do not sit on household furniture; use your own folding chair instead. Avoid placing personal items on floors or furniture. Wear gloves when handling in-home items, and place a white plastic barrier between you and a bed or couch if close contact is necessary.
- **Limit time in the home.** Don't linger after completing your business.
- **Check yourself before leaving.** Inspect clothing and belongings before entering your vehicle. Remove any affected clothing or disposable covers, seal them in a plastic bag and change into clean clothes.
- **Wash clothes after the visit.** Launder exposed clothing on high heat. Monitor your own home for signs of bedbugs.

Guidance for travelers

Travelers can take steps to avoid bringing bedbugs home from hotels or other public accommodations.

- **Before traveling,** call the local health department or ask your accommodations manager about recent bedbug activity.
- **Inspect your room.** Check mattresses, box springs, bed frames, headboards, baseboards, furniture, closets and bedding for live bugs, exoskeletons, blood stains or fecal spots. If you find bedbugs, request a different room or a refund and report the issue to the local health department.
- **Protect your belongings.** Store clothing in your luggage or hang it in the closet. Avoid placing items on the floor or in drawers.
- **After your stay, inspect luggage** before entering your vehicle or home. Seal affected items in plastic bags, wash and dry clothing on high heat and vacuum luggage outside your home.

Additional resources

- **Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC):** [cdc.gov/bed-bugs](https://www.cdc.gov/bed-bugs)
- **Hamilton County Public Health housing nuisance complaints:** hamiltoncountyhealth.org/services/environmental-health/housing-nuisance