

Bed Bugs

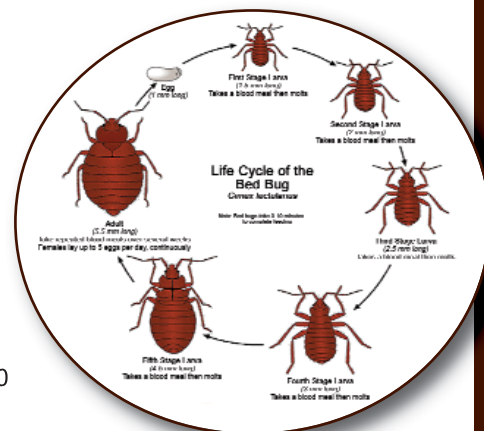


What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small wingless insects that feed solely upon the blood of warm blooded animals, you and I. Bed bugs and their relatives have evolved as nest parasites. Some species inhabit bird nests or bat roosts and await the return of their hosts; others have adapted well to living in the homes of people.

How quickly do they multiply?

Inside buildings, bed bugs can breed all year round. In the Northeast, they typically yield up to three litters per year. Their average lifespan is ten to thirteen months, and in that time, a female may lay 200–500 eggs depending on the temperature and the amount of food available. Females need a meal before laying eggs and the eggs hatch in about ten days. Under ideal conditions, the young can reach adulthood in five to eight weeks. Development occurs rapidly in temperatures ranging 70° to 82°F. Young bed bugs must eat before they can shed their skin and grow. They shed their skins five times before becoming adults. Bed bugs can go 80 to 140 days, or longer; without feeding.



Know the Facts

Myth

Changing the temperature of your house kills bed bugs.

Fact

True, heat and cold can kill bed bugs. But, fiddling with the thermostat isn't going to cut it. The temperature needs to be as high as 120°-130° Fahrenheit or below 32° Fahrenheit for a few weeks to kill bed bugs.

Myth

Lavender oil helps prevent bed bugs.

Fact

Lavender oil is not effective in the prevention of bed bug infestations. While there are various sprays and oils marketed as natural remedies; there is no documented proof that this method is effective.

Do bed bugs pose an infection control threat?

Despite what you may have heard or read elsewhere, bed bugs are not known to transmit disease or infection to their host. Bed bugs seek out people and animals, generally at night while their hosts are asleep, enabling them to bite and feed off of a host undetected. As they feed, tiny amounts of saliva are injected into the hosts skin. Repeated exposures to bed bug bites during a period of several weeks can cause people to become sensitized to the saliva and bites may result in allergic reactions. The skin lesion produced by a bed bug resembles those caused by many other kinds of insects, such as mosquitoes and fleas, making it difficult to identify a bed bug bite vs. other similar bug bites. A physician should be consulted to examine the bite and offer treatment, as needed. The affected person should resist the urge to scratch the bites as this can intensify the irritation and may lead to secondary infection. Patients are often treated with antihistamines and corticosteroids to reduce allergic reactions and inflammation.

In order for bed bugs to feed from a host, they use piercing mouthparts that contain two stylets: one stylet has a groove that carries saliva into the host, while the other has a groove through which host body fluids are absorbed. Saliva that is injected during the feeding can produce large swellings on the skin that itch and may become irritated and infected when scratched. There are cases where people have had an allergic reaction to bed bug bites, but again, bed bugs are not carriers of infectious diseases such as hepatitis, malaria, or HIV. Bed bugs do have stink glands that leave odors and also leave fecal spots on bed sheets and around hiding places.

What should you do if you find bed bugs?

There are several different kinds of insects that resemble bed bugs. Specimens should be carefully compared against Bed bug images to confirm their identity. If any questions remain regarding the identity of the bugs, submit them to a competent entomologist or pest management professional for evaluation.

Once the identity is confirmed, a plan should be devised to eliminate the bugs in a manner that promotes success while limiting unnecessary costs and exposure to insecticides. It is not necessary to discard furniture, first attempt to develop a treatment plan.

What you should NOT do

Don't panic. Although bed bugs can be annoying, they can be battled safely and successfully if you adopt a well-considered strategy.

Do not apply pesticides unless you fully understand what the chemicals are and the risks involved. Remember, you are legally liable if you misapply a pesticide, or apply it without a license to the property of another (including common spaces in apartment buildings).



The Bottom Line

For most people, bed bugs are more of a nuisance than a medical threat. Humans are generally responsible for introducing bed bugs into new areas. Without a host to provide transportation, bed bugs are limited in how far they can travel and spread slowly on their own.

Check It Out!

Go to www.siegelagency.com or contact our Risk Management Department at 1.800.622.8272 or by email at solutions@siegelagency.com for a complete copy of our booklet **"Bed Bugs: What You Need to Know."**



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