

# BED BUGS

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What does a bed bug look like?

The image to the right shows the life stages of a bed bug from egg to adult. Bed bug eggs are the size of a pin head and pearl-white in color. Young bed bugs are slightly larger and difficult to see because they are translucent or whitish-yellow in color. Adult bed bugs are about the size of an apple seed (3/16 to 1/4 inch long). If they haven't fed recently, they are long and brown, with a flat, oval-shaped body. If they have fed recently, they are longer and more balloon-like with a reddish-brown body.



### How will I know if there are bed bugs in my home?

Bed bugs are active only at night, usually just before dawn. During the day, they hide in cracks and crevices in walls, floors, beds, and furniture. When only a few bed bugs are present, they live close to human sleeping areas; when numerous, they can be found in many rooms of the house.

Bites on the skin are a poor indicator of bed bugs. A more accurate way to identify a possible infestation is by looking for physical signs of bed bugs. These include:

- Reddish stains on bed sheets or mattresses caused by bed bugs being crushed
- Dark spots about the size of a pin point, which are bed bug excrement and may bleed on fabric like a marker would
- Eggs and eggshells, which young bed bugs shed as they grow larger
- Live bed bugs

Since bed bugs are difficult to identify, it is best to consult a trained professional. You can also mail found insects to the address below for FREE identification.

Pennsylvania Integrated Pest Management Program  
Penn State Center  
675 Sansom Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

### How do I prevent bed bug infestations in my home?

Bed bugs cannot fly, so they infest homes by being transported in clothing, backpacks, suitcases, mattresses, or other furniture. They can also walk in from adjacent apartments or rooms through cracks or conduits for electrical wiring or plumbing. They search for sleeping humans by moving up walls, bedding, bed legs, or anything touching the bed. The following tips will help you prevent infestations in your home:

- Inspect secondhand furniture for signs of bed bugs before bringing them into your home.
- Protect mattresses and box springs with high quality encasements that will resist tearing. Regularly check the encasements for holes or tears, and replace them as needed. You can find encasements at stores that supply bedding like Walmart and Target, or online at [www.bedbugcentralstore.com](http://www.bedbugcentralstore.com).
- Reduce clutter in your home to reduce hiding places for bed bugs.
- Vacuum frequently (with a vacuum that has a HEPA filter), and immediately dispose of the bag or canister contents. Inspect the vacuum for bed bugs that may have become caught in the hose.
- Be careful when using shared laundry facilities. Remove items from the dryer directly into a bag, and fold them at home.
- If you live in a multi-family home, try to isolate your unit by installing door sweeps, and by sealing cracks and crevices along shared walls, floors, and ceilings with a silicone sealant.

## What do I do if I find bed bugs in my bed?

**DO NOT THROW OUT YOUR MATTRESS—EVEN IF YOU FIND BED BUGS IN IT!**

- Cover mattresses and box springs with high quality encasements, and never remove them. Bed bugs will be contained in the encasements and die. You can find encasements at stores that supply bedding, like Walmart and Target, or online at [www.bedbugcentralstore.com](http://www.bedbugcentralstore.com).
- Wash and dry all bedding on high heat.
- Take apart and clean bed frames thoroughly with hot, soapy water to ensure that all bed bugs and their eggs have been removed.
- Make your bed an island by moving it at least 6 inches away from the wall and removing everything under it. Then place bed bug interceptors under each bed leg and tuck in all bedding, so it doesn't touch the floor. You can find interceptors at stores with pest management supplies like Walmart or Target, or online at [www.bedbugcentralstore.com](http://www.bedbugcentralstore.com).
- Inspect other furniture and items around the bed, like bedside tables, lamps, pictures on the wall, clock radios, etc.
- Consult a pest management professional, and come up with a strategy to treat and eliminate the bed bugs in your home. There are many treatments that you can purchase and use on your own, but these are often unsafe and ineffective. For example, you should NEVER use bed bug foggers or bombs.

***This information is from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Pennsylvania Integrated Pest Management Program at Penn State. For additional details, please visit [www.epa.gov/bedbugs](http://www.epa.gov/bedbugs) and [www.extension.psu.edu/ipm](http://www.extension.psu.edu/ipm).***



One House at a Time (OHAAT) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Its current focus is a program called Beds for Kids, which helps children get the sleep they need to thrive. For more information about OHAAT or the Beds for Kids program, go to [www.oaat.org](http://www.oaat.org) or call 215-346-6427.



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