



# Bed Bugs: Answers to Commonly Asked Questions

## What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small, flat, brownish, wingless insects that feed mostly on human blood. Bed bugs prefer to live near their host, including inside cracks in furniture, floors, or walls and under mattresses. They have a lifespan of 10 months, and they are able to live 6 months without a blood meal.

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

Most bed bug bites are initially painless, but later turn into itchy skin welts. They may resemble mosquito bites, so it is difficult to identify the offending bug by just looking at the bite.

## Are bed bugs dangerous?

No. Although bed bugs are a nuisance, they are not known to spread disease.

## How does a home become infested with bed bugs?

In most cases, people carry bed bugs into their homes unknowingly in infested luggage, discarded furniture and mattresses, or on clothing. Bed bugs may also travel between apartments through small crevices and cracks in walls and floors.

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

You may notice itchy skin welts. You may also see the bed bugs themselves, small bloodstains from crushed insects, or dark spots from their droppings.

## How can I get rid of bed bugs?

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health recommends that homeowners hire a licensed, pest control professional to inspect for and eliminate bed bugs.

Bed bugs can be difficult to eliminate. Homeowners with an infestation should:

- Wash bedding, curtains, and clothes in hot water and dry for 20 minutes in a hot dryer.
- Store clean clothing and other items in plastic storage containers.
- Scrub mattresses with a stiff brush to dislodge bed bug eggs and cover the mattress with a waterproof mattress cover.
- Reduce clutter and seal cracks in furniture where bugs can hide.
- Vacuum rooms often and immediately place vacuum bags in plastic trash bags and discard.
- Pesticides should only be used as directed.

## How can I keep bed bugs out of my home?

- Keep luggage on a luggage rack and off the floor when traveling.
- Wash clothing and belongings immediately after returning from a trip.
- Inspect used furniture for bed bugs before bringing it into your home.
- Never bring discarded bed frames, mattresses, or upholstered furniture into your home.



*For more information contact your doctor, or the Philadelphia Department of Public Health,  
Division of Disease Control at 215-685-6740.*