



ERIE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

420 Superior Street · Sandusky, OH 44870 · (419) 626-5623

BED BUGS

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are small parasitic insects that drink blood from humans and animals as they sleep. Bed bugs are between 1-7mm, wingless, flat, and are a red-brown color. While bed bugs do not transmit diseases, they are a common pest that often leads to itching and loss of sleep.

What are the symptoms?

Main symptom of bed bugs is itchy bites on the skin, however these bites can take up to 14 days to appear and look similar to other insect bites, rashes, and hives making this method of detection less reliable. Physical signs of bed bugs include reddish stains from bed bugs being crushed or small, dark fecal stains on bed sheets and mattresses. Eggs, eggshells, or exoskeletons after molting. Live bed bugs in the folds of mattresses or sheets and a sweet musty odor. Bed bugs are commonly found in bedding materials but can be in other living areas where fabric, wood and paper surfaces are common including furniture, baseboards, pictures, loose wallpaper, and even inside electronic devices.

How is it spread?

Bed bugs are insect “hitchhikers” that travel by moving furniture, clothing, beds and other possessions from one location to another. They can be unknowingly spread to homes or workplaces and are not a sign of a dirty home.

How is it treated?

Bed bug bites are not a serious medical threat. No specific treatment is necessary other than the treatment of bites. Bites can be treated with antiseptic creams or lotions, antihistamines, and not scratching affected areas. Wash affected clothing and bedding in hot water and dry on a high heat setting to kill bed bugs and their eggs. Infestations require a pest control professional to eliminate the bugs.

How to prevent bed bugs?

Preventing bed bugs at home:

- Carefully inspect used furniture before purchasing
- Keep clothing off floors and ideally in zippered clothing bags
- Seal any cracks or crevices in your home

Preventing bed bugs while traveling:

- Inspect bed and furniture upon arrival
- Keep belongings in clear storage containers and bags
- Wash and dry all clothing upon return home



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Erie County Health Department
Office of Epidemiology and Surveillance
(419) 626-5623

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov
US Environmental Protection Agency www.epa.gov

* Adapted from the following websites: CDC, EPA, Cuyahoga County Board of Health