



What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are parasitic insects that consume human blood. Largely nocturnal, they typically feed without the human noticing. This, combined with their preference for warm environments, such as sleep areas, gives bed bugs their name.

What do bed bugs look like?

At birth, bed bugs are light-colored. As they mature, their coloration shifts towards brown, and they reach a length of four or five millimeters. A fully matured bed bug has a flattened, oval-shaped body type, and have frontal, but not hind, wings. When having recently fed, a bed bug's coloration goes through a series of changes. As the blood digests, the bed bug's abdomen goes from red to brown to black, usually over the course of 48 hours.

Where do bed bugs come from?

Bed bugs do not appear without cause. While it is a myth that they're attracted to unkempt locales, they are prone to infest areas with a higher concentration of hosts. Oftentimes, this means that locations such as apartment buildings and hotels are more susceptible to a bed bug infestation than a single-family home. If a traveler, for instance, is residing in an area with bed bugs, the bugs

could their way into bags and jackets. Simply by moving on to the next place, the traveler has become a vessel for the bed bugs to find new sites, which causes new infestations.

What are the symptoms of a bed bug infestation?

If concerned that an infestation is possible, there are several signs one can look out for. By detecting bed bugs early, much pain and expense can be avoided. Notable symptoms and detection methods are as follows:

- Rust-colored stains on bed sheets, or near any upholstered or warm area in the vicinity. These are resultant from crushing the parasite while asleep.
- Dark spots on bed sheets. These are stains resultant from bed bug feces.
- Red bites on arms and shoulders. Similar pests typically bite around the ankles instead.
- If itchiness is experienced while trying to sleep, the bed bugs might be in the midst of feeding.
- A strong wet-towel scent in the bedroom. This is resultant from large numbers of bed bugs releasing pheromones.
- Small brown ovals around the bed. These are bed bugs' molted exoskeletons.
- Live bed bugs. They may be found within clothing, or around the sleeping area. While obvious, seeing one is a telltale sign that there may be more.

What do bed bug bites look like?

Bed bug bites are small red welts that often manifest on arms shoulders. It is also common for them to appear on the upper and lower back. When in the act of feeding, bed bugs simultaneously extract the host's blood while also inserting its saliva. It is the saliva that allows the bed bug to consume without alerting the host, who is usually in the midst of sleep. While 65% of people are not allergic to the bites, the 35% that are often experience swelling, inflammation and scabbing around the site. Treatment with soap, water, and

corticosteroid cream can help reduce itchiness and the risk of subsequent infection.



How can one prevent bed bug infestations?

By carrying out a few regular tasks, the chances of having a bed bug infestation within the home can be greatly reduced. The best bed bug prevention methods are as follows:

- Carefully inspecting used furniture before taking home
- Exercising caution when using a communal laundry facility
- Reducing the amount of visible clutter to reduce number of living spaces for bed bugs.
- Sealing openings on the floors and walls to reduce number of living spaces for bed bugs.
- Purchasing a protective plastic cover for a mattress, so bed bugs cannot burrow within.

How can one get rid of bed bugs?

If a mattress is infested with bed bugs, then it is best to simply buy a new one. Should there be a desire to salvage it, however, then it is best to scrub it thoroughly, followed by a round of vacuuming. After this, it is optional to put a plastic cover over the mattress to prevent new bed bugs from getting in, and starving the bugs that still remain. This starvation tactic may take over a year, as bed bugs can survive extended periods of time without feeding. That said, if the cover is not used, be absolutely sure that there are no additional bed bugs, as it only takes one to restart the infestation. To ensure such, bedding, curtains, clothes, stuffed animals, and any other potential bed bug hiding places need to be intensely cleaned.

Does heat kill bed bugs?

Heat can kill bed bugs. With a thermal death point 113°F, there are tools meant to locally sustain such temperatures in order to ensure the death of all bed bugs and eggs in the vicinity. A household clothes dryer, for instance, can be a great tool when dealing with smaller infested articles and bed sheets. When running on high, these appliances average an output of 135°F. If kept operating for 30 minutes or more, there will be a high likelihood of total mortality. For furniture and large spaces, however, a clothes dryer is not practical. In those cases, a professional heating system may be required.

What are some home remedies for bed bugs?

When first encountering a bed bug infestation in the home, it is wise to first try remedying the situation on one's own. These home remedies will vary in efficacy depending on the severity and location of the infestation. These treatment options include:

- Use a clothes dryer to kill the bed bugs on sheets and clothes.
- Use a combination of a hair dryer and hand vacuum to remove bed bugs from crevices within the walls.
- Place smaller infested items in the freezer.

- Use a vacuum cleaner to remove bed bugs and eggs from the vicinity around the mattress.
- Natural insect sprays, such as lavender and tea tree oil, can act as nontoxic insecticide options.

How much is a bed bug exterminator?

Exterminating a bed bug infestation is a great option for when the situation is no longer manageable. The cost of doing so through a professional outlet will vary based on the experience of the exterminator in question, the size and location of the infestation itself, and the chosen method of extermination. These factors in mind, an extermination can range from \$500 to \$1,500.

On the cheaper end of the spectrum, the application of spray insecticides will kill the infestation in a nontoxic manner. Another option involves large-space heat treatment. At the cost of leaving the house for a day, the infested space will be heated to over 120°F, killing every living thing therein. When all else fails, fumigation is the last, and most-effective option. By bombing the house in poison gases, nothing can survive. On the downside, the residing family will need to vacate the premises for at least 72 hours afterwards. In the event these options fit your given situation, our [top 10 pest control specialists](#) would be happy to assist.