

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on the blood of mammals and birds. Adult bed bugs are oval, wingless and rusty red colored, and have flat bodies, antennae and small eyes. They are visible to the naked eye, but often hide in cracks and crevices. When bed bugs feed, their bodies swell and become a brighter red. In homes, bed bugs feed primarily on the blood of humans, usually at night when people are sleeping.



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

Typically, the bite is painless and rarely awakens a sleeping person. However, it can produce large, itchy welts on the skin. Welts from bed bug bites do not have a red spot in the center – those welts are more characteristic of flea bites.

### Are bed bugs dangerous?

Although bed bugs may be a nuisance to people, they are not known to spread disease. They are known to cause allergic reactions from their saliva in sensitive people.

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

In most cases, bed bugs are transported from infested areas to non-infested areas when they cling onto someone's clothing, or crawl into luggage, furniture or bedding that is then brought into homes.

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

If you have bed bugs, you may also notice itchy welts on you or your family member's skin. You may also see the bed bugs themselves, small bloodstains from crushed bed bugs, or dark spots from bed bug droppings in your home. Bed bugs often hide in or near beds and bedroom furniture, and in the seams, and folds of mattresses. In more severe infestations, bed bugs may spread to cracks and crevices in bed frames and box springs; behind headboards; inside nightstands; behind baseboards, window and door casings, pictures, and moldings; and in nearby furniture, loosened wallpaper, and cracks in plaster and flooring. Bed bugs may also hide in piles of books, papers, boxes, and other clutter near sleeping areas.

### How can I get rid of bed bugs?

Washing clothing and bedding in hot water will kill bed bugs on those items. Vacuuming and steam cleaning carpet and furniture will help to reduce the number of bed bugs. Mattresses or upholstered furniture may need to be discarded. When discarding these items clearly mark them as infested when setting out for trash pick up. There are also products available to completely encase mattresses and box frames – available at allergy supply stores. The DuPage County Health Department recommends hiring a licensed pest control operator (PCO). The PCO should be licensed with the Illinois Department of Public Health. For more information on hiring a PCO please go to: [www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/pcpestcntrl.htm](http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/pcpestcntrl.htm)

### What should tenants do?

If you are a tenant, contact your property manager or landlord to discuss your respective obligations and come to an agreement on a plan to manage the infestation. If there is an infestation, landlords should contract with a licensed pest control operator to manage the problem. Request a written integrated pest management (IPM) plan from the pest control operator. The plan will include the methods and insecticides to be used, and describe the efforts expected by the building manager as well as by the tenants.

### Where Can I get More Information?

For more information about bed bugs and their control please contact your area Sanitarian or visit the following web sites:

#### Illinois Department of Public Health:

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/pcbedbugs.htm>

#### Ohio State University Entomology Department:

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/2000/2105.html>