

# Poulin's Pest Control's

## Fact Sheet

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### BED BUG



#### **What are bed bugs?**

- Bed bugs are parasites that preferentially feed on humans. If people aren't available, they instead will feed on other warm-blooded animals, including birds, rodents, bats, and pets.
- Bed bugs have been documented as pests since the 17th century. They were introduced into our country by the early colonists. Bed bugs were common in North America prior to World War II, after which time widespread use of synthetic insecticides such as DDT greatly reduced their numbers. Improvements in household and personal cleanliness as well as increased regulation of the used furniture market also likely contributed to their reduced pest status.

#### **What are some of the habits of a bed bug?**

- Bed bugs usually bite at night while occupants are sleeping. The person seldom knows they are being bitten. Symptoms vary with the individual; some can develop an itchy welt or localized swelling, while others have little or no reaction.
- A common concern with bed bugs is whether they transmit disease. Although bed bugs can harbor pathogens in their bodies, transmission to humans is considered highly unlikely.
- Bed bugs will harbor in an area near a blood meal. Note, however, that bed bugs will move distances at night for a blood meal which is why infestations commonly occur in beds. Bed bugs are also excellent at relocating by hitching rides in luggage, boxes, shoes, and any other mobile material.
- An infestation of bed bugs is NOT evidence of unclean or unsanitary living areas. World class hotels have reported bed bug infestations in recent years perhaps due to the increased domestic and international mobility of society in the past few decades.

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### **What do they look like?**

- Adult bed bugs are brown to reddish-brown (after feeding), oval-shaped, flattened, and about 3/16ö (4-5 mm) long. Their flat shape enables them to readily hide in cracks and crevices. The body becomes more elongated, swollen, and dark red after a blood meal. Bed bugs have a beaklike piercing-sucking mouthpart system. The adults have small, stubby, nonfunctional wing pads. Newly hatched nymphs are nearly colorless, becoming brownish as they mature. Nymphs have the general appearance of adults. Eggs are white and about 1/32 inch long.
- Female bedbugs can lay over 500 eggs over a lifetime and each bed bug will molt or shed its shell five times as it grows and a blood meal is required for each molt. If blood meals become scarce, bed bugs can slow their life process until a blood meal source is found.
- Usually, the first sign of bed bug infestation is the appearance of small brownish or reddish dots on sheets and mattresses, bed clothes, and walls. These are fecal spots or droppings on the surface of linens from these bugs. An offensive, sweet, musty odor from their scent glands may be detected when bed bug infestations are severe.
- Occupants may also notice swelling where they have been bitten. The saliva of the bed bug may cause a swelling on most people when they are bitten but they do not leave a wound. Swelling may include redness in some sensitive people.

### **How Infestations Originate?**

- The bugs are usually transported on luggage, clothing, beds, furniture, etc. Outbreaks can often be traced to international travel from countries where the bugs are common, such as Asia, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, or Central/South America. Once bed bugs are introduced, they often spread room to room. Unlike cockroaches that feed on filth, the level of cleanliness has little to do with most bed bug infestations.
- In the past decade, bed bugs have begun making a comeback across North America. International travel and commerce are thought to facilitate the spread of these insect hitchhikers, because eggs, young, and adult bed bugs are readily transported in luggage, clothing, bedding, and furniture.
- Bed bugs can infest airplanes, ships, trains, and buses. Bed bugs are most frequently found in dwellings with a high rate of occupant turnover, such as hotels, motels, hostels, dormitories, shelters, apartment complexes, tenements, and prisons. Such infestations usually are not a reflection of poor hygiene or bad housekeeping.

### **What can be done to prevent a Bed Bug infestation?**

- Do not bring infested items into one's home.

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- Carefully inspect clothing and baggage of travelers, being on the lookout for bed bugs and their tell-tale fecal spots.
- Inspect secondhand beds, bedding, and furniture.
- Caulk cracks and crevices in the building exterior and also repair or screen openings to exclude birds, bats, and rodents that can serve as alternate hosts for bed bugs.
- Repair cracks in plaster and glue down loosened wallpaper to eliminate bed bug harborage sites. Remove and destroy wild animal roosts and nests when possible.
- Frequently vacuuming the mattress and premises, laundering bedding and clothing in hot water, and cleaning and sanitizing dwellings can help prevent a bed bug infestation.
- In hotels, apartments, and other multiple-type dwellings, it is advisable to also inspect adjoining units since bed bugs can travel long distances.

### **If I discard my mattress will this solve the problem?**

- No, discarding the mattress will not solve your problem. A new mattress can quickly become infested if bed bugs are still on the premises.

### **What to do if there is a bed bug infestation?**

- A critical first step is to correctly identify the blood-feeding pest, as this determines which management tactics to adopt that take into account specific bug biology and habits.
- Control of bed bugs is best achieved by following an integrated pest management (IPM) approach that involves multiple tactics, such as preventive measures, sanitation, and chemicals applied to targeted sites. Severe infestations usually are best handled by a Poulin's Pest Management Professional.
- Wash all the linens in the house.
  - Do not treat bed sheets, shirts, towels, face cloths, etc. with insecticides.
- These items should be dry cleaned or laundered in hot water and dried using the "hot" setting.
- The first step of control is to have a Poulin's Pest Management Professional thoroughly inspect the area. This inspection is required to determine the places where the bed bugs are living. Once the inspection is complete, the Poulin's Pest Management Professional will determine the proper type of control technique; treat the area and most likely return for a follow up inspection.

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### **Inspection and treated areas would include the following:**

- On a mattress: inspect and treat along the ridges, buttons, and labels on the mattress. Use a properly labeled insecticide to treat this area.
- On a box spring: inspect and treat the corners of the box spring, ridges, and any rips in the box spring. Be sure to inspect and treat bottom side of a box spring with a residual insecticide. You may need to remove the liner from the bottom of the box spring. Obtain the customers permission before removing the liner from the bottom of the box spring.
- Furniture such as dressers, night stands, pictures frames on a wall, desks, bed frames, etc. need to be inspected and treated with a labeled residual insecticide.
- Chairs, couches need to be inspected and treated with a properly labeled insecticide. Upholstered areas will require time to dry before customer re-use.
- Vacuuming the mattress and premises, can help remove the majority of a bed bug infestation. After vacuuming, immediately place the vacuum cleaner bag in a plastic bag, seal tightly, and discard in a container outdoors-this prevents captured bed bugs from escaping.
- Inspect and treat with a labeled residual insecticide around:
  - Window frames
  - Door frames
  - Curtain rods
  - Behind light fixtures
  - Behind wood trim
  - Floor cracks
  - Baseboards
  - Carpet tack boards
  - In and around electrical boxes
  - Behind wallpaper and/or loosened wallpaper
  - Behind mirrors
  - Behind pictures
  - Wall hangings
  - Drapery pleats
  - Cracks in the walls
  - Ceiling molding
- Note that voids like pipe chases or wall voids should be treated with labeled insecticide dust
- Inspect and treat with labeled insecticide in the closet areas around the door frames and any shelving units.
- Bathrooms: inspect and treat the base boards, pipe chases, behind mirrors, under the counters, and shelving units with a labeled residual insecticide.

### **Does the entire house or hotel need to be treated or just the infested rooms?**

- Depending on the infestation, it is recommended to treat the entire house due to the fact that the insect may be harboring in adjacent rooms and crawl to other parts of the structure. In hotels, it is recommended to treat the surrounding rooms.