

## FACTS ABOUT BED BUGS

**Bed bugs- what are they?** Bed Bugs are small, flat reddish brown insects that feed on the blood of people and animals while they sleep. They can range from 1mm to 7mm in size (roughly the size of Lincoln's head on a penny). While feeding, bed bugs inject an anesthetic and an anticoagulant that prevents a person from realizing they are being bitten.

**Who gets bed bugs and how?** Anyone can get bed bugs, their presence is not determined by the cleanliness of the living conditions where they are found. They can survive long periods of time without a blood meal and travel in seams and folds of luggage, overnight bags, folded clothes, bedding, furniture and anywhere else they can hide. Most people do not realize they are transporting stow-away bed bugs as they travel from location to location, infecting areas as they travel.

**Where are bed bugs found?** Bed bugs are experts at hiding and infestations commonly occur in areas where people sleep. They hide during the day in seams of mattresses, box springs, bed frames, headboards, dresser tables, inside cracks or crevices, behind wallpaper or any other clutter around a bed.

**Do bed bugs spread disease?** Bed bugs are not known to spread disease.

## SYMPTOMS

-Bite responses can range from absence of any physical signs of the bite, to a small bite mark to a serious allergic reaction. Bite marks often appear as red, itchy marks on the face, neck, arms, hands or any other parts of the body while sleeping. Bite marks may take up to 14 days to develop in some people and may appear randomly or in a straight line and often resemble a mosquito or flea bite.

-Other clues: bed bugs found in the folds of mattresses and sheets, bed bugs' exoskeletons after molting, rusty colored spots on furniture and a sweet musty odor.

## TREATMENT

-Avoid scratching area

-Apply hydrocortisone cream or ointment as directed

-Take a non-sedating antihistamine, such as fexofenadine (Allegra), loratadine (Claritin), or cetirizine (Zyrtec), as directed

-You can also take Benadryl, 25 to 50 mg orally every 6 hours. This can cause drowsiness, and may help with sleep if you are itching at night.

## **CONTROL OF BED BUGS**

-If you suspect you have an infestation contact your landlord or a professional pest control company that is experienced with treating bed bugs.

### **PREVENTION**

-Learn to recognize signs of bed bugs and regularly inspect for them.

-Avoid used furniture and items left on the curb- they might have bed bugs.

-Vacuum regularly, seal cracks in wooden floors, repair peeling wallpaper, don't store things under beds, and maintain a gap between the walls and your bedroom and living room furniture.

-When traveling inspect rooms, keep luggage closed and use luggage racks away from the wall.

#### References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Bed Bugs FAQs

Cornell University, FAQ List for Bed Bugs