

## Bedbugs



### What are bedbugs?

Bedbugs are brownish coloured, wingless, flattened insects measuring 2-5 mm in length. They are nocturnal insects who feed solely on the blood from humans and animals. Bedbugs do not spread diseases, but they are unpleasant, and their bites can, in some cases, cause severe irritation and distress.

Anyone can get bed bugs and their presence is not an indicator of poor personal hygiene or cleanliness.

Contrary to their name, they are not only found in beds and will often infest cracks and crevices in the surrounding furniture, behind skirting boards, under loose wallpaper and even in electrical sockets and fittings.

### Where do bedbugs come from?

Bedbug infestations have become more common over the years in the UK.

The most common way for infestations to come into your home is from travelling.

Bedbugs can attach themselves to your luggage, bags, clothing or through second-hand furniture.

### How do I know if I have bedbugs?

Bedbugs typically bite at night and tend to bite areas that are exposed when you are sleeping, often the head, neck, shoulders, or arms. Bedbug bites can be raised and itchy and often form in a line or grouped together. [Bedbugs - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bedbugs/).

### Other things to look out for:

- Small reddish-brown clusters or dark faecal spots (about 1mm wide) that look like an ink dot are usually found on bedding or furniture.
- Small blood smears on bedding from a bite or from squashing a bedbug.
- And the most obvious but not always the first sign you find - seeing the small brownish insects themselves, in and around your bed frame or sleeping area.

### **How to treat bedbug bites?**

- The symptoms of bedbug bites are often treated with topical steroids (such as hydrocortisone 1%) once or twice a day for up to seven days.
- Antihistamines may be beneficial for those with pruritus.
- Topical or systemic antibiotics may be necessary for those with secondary infection of their bites.
- See your pharmacist or GP for advice on topical treatments.
  
- Avoid scratching to prevent infection.

### **How to get rid of bedbugs?**

It's very difficult to get rid of bedbugs yourself because they can be hard to find and may be resistant to some insecticides.

Bed bugs can spread rapidly therefore prompt detection and taking swift, effective action are key to controlling an infestation.

If you suspect you have an infestation, you should contact your local Environmental Health Team or pest control service for advice. You can [find your local council on GOV.UK](#).

### **There are some things you can do to reduce an infestation.**

- wash affected bedding and clothing on a hot wash at 60°C and tumble dry on a hot setting for at least 30 minutes.
- Freezing may also be effective; however, affected items must be kept frozen for at least one or two weeks.
- Disposal of highly infested items, together with physical removal of bedbugs and mattress covers and vacuuming, are usually recommended.
  
- Encasing mattresses in a protective covering (such as those used for people with allergies) may be an option; however, the seal needs to be tight, with no gaps in the encasement material.

## Providing care in an individual's own home

Occasionally, there may be bed bugs in the home of a client to whom you may be providing care. You may worry about how best to care for your client and at the same time protect your home from the bed bugs.

- Personal Protective Equipment is not required when caring for individuals with suspected or confirmed bedbugs in their home. Wear PPE as needed for routine practice.
- If you know a client's home has bed bugs, consider visiting the client last on your schedule if this is possible.
- Avoid sitting on the client's bed or sofa.
- Take as little as possible with you when you go in. Bags, and coats are good hiding places for bed bugs. Leave them in your car or outside if you can.
- Place your bag in a plastic bag to act as a barrier. Bed bugs are not likely to crawl on it because it's smooth. Discard the plastic bag upon leaving the clients home.
- Avoid placing your bag or equipment on the client's bed, carpeted floor or upholstered furniture.
- Those with an infestation should be supported to contact a pest control expert as soon as the pest has been identified. For more frail and vulnerable individuals this may require that you contact pest control on their behalf.

## On return home after work

- Take off any clothing that may have bed bugs as close to the entrance door as possible.
- Put all your clothing in a plastic bag.
- Seal the bag and take it directly to the washing machine and wash on a high wash at 60°C.
- Put the clothes in a dryer on the hottest setting for 30 minutes. It is the heat of the hot dryer that kills the bed bugs.

## Resources:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bedbugs/>

<https://bpca.org.uk/a-z-of-pest-advice/bed-bugs-control-how-to-get-rid-of-bed-bugs-bpca-a-z-of-pests/189186>

