



## Public Health Department

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### Environmental Health

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## **Bedbug Facts and Prevention**

### **Pest Overview:**

- Bed bugs are small, flat insects that feed on the blood of humans and animals. They are copper-colored, wingless, and about ¼ of an inch in length.
- Infestations of these insects usually occur in areas where people sleep or spend a significant amount of time. These areas include apartments, shelters, rooming houses, hotels, nursing homes, hospitals, cruise ships, buses, trains, and dorm rooms.
- Bed bugs are experts at hiding. They hide during the day in places such as seams of mattresses, box springs, bed frames, headboards, dresser tables, cracks or crevices, behind wallpaper, and under any clutter or objects around a bed.
- Bed bugs can travel over 100 feet in one night, but they tend to live within 8 feet of where people sleep. They can live several months without a blood meal.
- Bed bugs are usually transported from place to place by people. They can hide in the seams and folds of luggage, overnight bags, clothing, bedding, and furniture.
- Most people do not realize they can transport stow-away bed bugs as they travel potentially infesting new areas, including their homes, as they relocate.
  - In other words, a residential unit can have an infestation of bed bugs when new people move in, or an infestation can be started when bed bugs are brought into a residential unit by an outside source.
- Although the exact cause is not known, the recent resurgence in the bedbug population could be associated with a number of factors:
  - Increased resistance of bedbugs to available pesticides; greater international and domestic travel; lack of knowledge regarding control of bedbugs due to their prolonged absence; and the continuing decline or elimination of effective vector/pest control problems at state and local public health agencies.

### **Signs of Bedbug Activity:**

- An easy way to tell if you have bedbugs is by seeing dark spotting and staining on your mattress. It is caused by their droppings.
- You might also see eggs and eggshells, molted skins of aging nymphs, and/or the bugs themselves.

### **Bedbug Standards:**



- Bed bugs, like head lice, feed on the blood of humans but are not believed to transmit disease. Many people, however, have mild to severe allergic reaction to bed bug bites.
- Environmental Health is considered a resource for housing authorities when disease vectors are involved. However, since bed bugs do not carry diseases, they technically are not disease vectors.
- Since bed bugs infestations are not related to structural issues in residences, they do not clearly constitute an issue that is under the housing authority responsibility.
- **Bottom Line:** There is no clear regulatory authority for bed bug infestation.
  - The local housing authority will determine whether to require the owner of the residence hire an exterminator.

**Bedbug Prevention:**

- Reduce clutter around the home.
- Seal cracks and crevices.
- Vacuum your home regularly.
- Check all second hand beds, bedding, and furniture.
- Examine the bed and headboard area for signs of bedbugs when traveling.
- Wash, dry, or freeze all clothing bought at a garage sale or second hand stores right away.

**Bedbug Control:**

- The only way to remove bedbugs from your home is by using insecticides. Household surface sprays containing Malathion or Pyrethrum can be somewhat effective, but they may not remove the full infestation. It is recommended that you contact a licensed pest control company for the treatment of bedbugs.

**Additional Information and Resources:**

**The CDC and EPA have released a joint statement on bed bug control.**

[http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/publications/bed\\_bugs\\_cdc-epa\\_statement.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/publications/bed_bugs_cdc-epa_statement.htm)

**CDPH Division of Communicable Disease Control webpage.**

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/BedBugEasytoRead.pdf>

**Butte County Communicable Disease & Emergency Response (CDER) bedbug webpage:**

<http://www.buttecounty.net/publichealth/cder/bedbugs.html>

**San Diego County bedbug webpage.**

<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/pests/bedbugs.html>

**Los Angeles County powerpoint presentation on bedbugs.**

<http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/docs/BedBugSBPresentation.pdf>