



NL Health Services

Infection Prevention and Control

FACT SHEET

Bed Bugs



What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small brown insects that feed on human blood. They tend to live within 8 feet of where people sleep. Bed bugs are about the size of an apple seed but after feeding can swell in size and become dark red in color. An adult bed bug can live for several months. Although bed bugs are a nuisance, they are not known to spread disease.

Bed bug bites

Bed bug bites do not pose a serious health threat. They are painless, and most people do not realize they have been bitten until several days after the initial bite. Bed bug bites look much like a mosquito bite – a slightly swollen, red area that may be itchy and irritating. If itching is an issue, you can take an antihistamine (i.e., Benadryl). Scratching may cause open sores allowing infection to enter the body. If you think you have an infection, reach out to your health care clinician.

How do I know if I have bed bugs?

Potential signs of bed bugs may include:

- Unexplained bites or red marks on your skin.
- Black or dark red spots on bed linens, mattress, or box springs.
- Cast-off skins from bed bugs or actual live or dead bed bugs.

How do bed bugs get into my home?

- Bed bugs cannot fly but they are experts at hiding. They may hide in places such as the seams of mattresses, headboards, dresser tables, etc.
- Bed bugs also travel on things such as luggage, clothing, furniture, or household goods that are moved from place to place.

How do I get rid of bed bugs?

- Getting rid of bed bugs can be difficult and it is best to contact a pest control company.
- Clothing and bedding can be put in the washer and dryer on high temperature for about 20 minutes – careful to not overload the washer/dryer or this method may not work.
- A bed bug cover can be placed over the mattress as well.

Who do I contact in healthcare facilities?

- If bedbugs are suspected in your room or facility, staff should reach out to Environmental Services.