

BED BUGS '*Cimex lectularius*'

Fact Sheet

What are bed bugs?

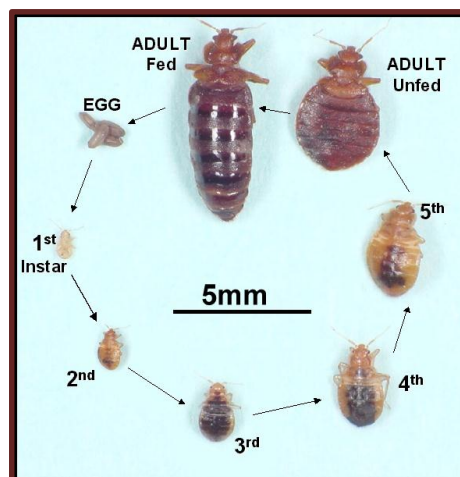
Bed bugs are small insects that can feed on the blood of sleeping humans. They hide near places where people sleep and come out to feed at night. Their bites aren't usually a health hazard, but they can produce itchy red spots in some people. Bed bugs can spread in clothing while travelling, or in second hand furniture.



How can I tell if I have bed bugs?

Bed bug bites show up as small red spots on exposed skin – similar to sandfly or mosquito bites. Often bites will be grouped together in lines. There may also be blood spots on sheets and pillows. Bed bugs are not known to transmit disease.

Adult bed bugs are rusty brown insects with a flat, oval body about 4 – 7 mm long. During the day, bed bugs can be found hiding in bedheads, bedside furniture, behind pictures, electrical switches, carpets, drapes, mattresses and cracks and crevices, usually within a 3 metres of a bed.



What should I do about bed bugs?

Bites

- Itching from bites can be treated with antihistamines. To avoid infection, it is better not to scratch itchy bites.
- Some people are allergic to bed bug saliva and can get painful, swollen bite marks. If bites are painful you should consult your general practitioner.
- In very rare cases, people can have a severe allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This is a medical emergency and you should dial 111 immediately.

Eradication

If detected early, infestations can often be eliminated using non-chemical treatments. More severe infestations will often require a combination of pesticides and non-chemical treatments.

Non chemical treatments

- Search around the bed, and the house, to identify infested areas.
- Vacuum every day with a nozzle attachment. Focus on places where bed bugs may be hiding (e.g. mattress seams, baseboards, behind furniture). Consider steam cleaning.
- Wash infested clothing and bedding in hot water wash and dry on hot cycle in clothes drier (carry to machine in plastic bag to prevent dropping insects through house and infecting other areas)

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- Delicate materials can be placed in the freezer (-20 degrees Celsius for 24 hours)
- Reduce bug hiding places by removing clutter, cleaning or sealing cracks and crevices, and re-attaching peeling wallpaper.
- Multiple treatments will often be required.

Pesticides

Call a professional pest controller to identify all hiding places and spray with an approved insecticide with a residual activity.

If you decide to use an over-the-counter pesticide, ensure that the label specifically states it is for the control of bed bugs. Always treat pesticides with caution and follow the directions on the label.

Synthetic pyrethroids are the chemicals often used for control. However, they may just repel the bugs instead of killing them. Carbamates and organophosphates are more effective but some are unsafe for use indoors or on bedding. Be sure to check the labels.

WARNING

Using the wrong pesticide or using it incorrectly to treat for bed bugs can make you sick, may not solve the problem, and could even make it worse by causing the bed bugs to hide where the pesticide won't reach them. It is best to consult a pest control professional.

Prevention

Always check second-hand furniture before bringing it into your home. Avoid buying second-hand mattresses. Wash second-hand bedding and clothing in hot water immediately (provided the fabric can tolerate it).

When travelling – either within New Zealand or overseas – always check your hotel room for bed bugs before you settle in. Keep your bags off the floor, and check them for bed bugs before you leave. When you get home, wash your clothes in the hottest water the fabric can tolerate. Vacuum the inside and outside of your bags, paying special attention to creases. Empty the vacuum cleaner into a plastic bag and seal it before disposing of it in the rubbish..

For more information

Check out the following

- <http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/environmental-health/pests-and-insects/bed-bugs>
- <http://www.kiwicare.co.nz/pest/pests/a-g/bed-bugs/>
- <http://www.arphs.govt.nz>
- <http://www.bedbug.org.au>
- <http://dermnetnz.org/arthropods/bed-bugs.html>

Or you can contact your local Community and Public Health office (contact details below) and ask for the duty Health Protection Officer.

Community and Public Health contact details:

Christchurch Office:	03 364 1777
South Canterbury Office:	03 687 2600
West Coast Office:	03 768 1160

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