

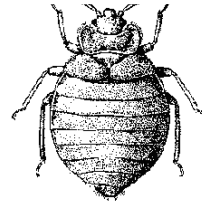


PORTLAND MAINE

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Bed Bugs

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small, brownish-reddish, flat, oval-shaped insects. They feed on human blood and also small animals or birds and may live for many weeks without eating. They do not fly or hop but are fast-moving. They usually come out at night and stay hidden during the day. They lay many small white eggs that hatch into more young bed bugs.

How did they get here?

Because bed bugs are small and flat, they can hide in small cracks and move easily from place to place. They get into your house on things like furniture, clothing, bed sheets and suitcases. Common hiding places include mattress seams, floor cracks, carpeting, baseboards and furniture. They are more likely to be where people come and go a lot, such as theaters, shelters, buses, trains, and hotels.

What are the signs and symptoms of bed bugs?

Bed bugs jab into the skin to suck blood for their feedings. This causes areas of swelling or red bumps like other bug bites. The bites may itch and can become infected if scratched repeatedly. Large numbers of bed bugs can cause a sickly sweet-smelling odor and you may see bloody or dark spots on bed sheets, posts or frames and around their hiding places.

How are bed bug bites treated?

No medicine is usually needed to treat the bites. A drug store product like Calamine lotion may help to stop the itching. For really bad itching, or if there are signs of infection, like redness, fever, pain, or oozing, see your doctor. **Bed bugs are not known to carry disease.**

How do you get rid of bed bugs?

Control of a bed bug problem needs careful planning and effort. Pesticides are needed to kill them but they can harm humans if used in the wrong way. For that reason, it is best to contact a local pest control company to get rid of them safely. Before the pest control workers arrive you should:

1. Pick up toys, books, dishes and other belongings that may be on the floor or on the furniture and put them away. They get in the way of the workers and are also good places for bed bugs to hide.
2. Wash all clothing, bedding, and other washable items in hot water and dry them in a hot dryer. Do not bring them back into the house until after it has been sprayed.
3. Vacuum floors, walls, furniture and mattresses thoroughly. Throw away the vacuum bag in a sealed trash bag after use.
4. It is best to throw away mattresses once bed bugs get into them. If this is not possible, the workers may be able to spray parts of the bed and you will then need to buy a zippered vinyl mattress cover and vinyl pillowcases for each bed. Leave these covers on for six months to a year.
5. You must leave the house while the workers are there and wait until two hours afterwards to avoid being hurt by the spray. Sometimes, a few bed bugs remain. If so, call the workers to come back to spray the house a second time.