

# ALLEGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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## Office Administration

(269) 673-5411

## Bioterrorism Preparedness

673-5411

## Personal Health

673-5411



## Communicable Disease

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## Environmental Health

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## Resource Recovery

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## Bed Bugs

### What are Bed Bugs?

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on the blood of mammals and birds. Adult bed bugs are oval, wingless and rusty red colored, and have flat bodies, antennae and small eyes. They are visible to the naked eye, but often hide in cracks and crevices. When bed bugs feed, their bodies swell and become a brighter red. In homes, bed bugs feed primarily on the blood of humans, usually at night when people are sleeping.

### What does a bed bug bite feel and look like?

Typically, the bite is painless and rarely awakens a sleeping person. However, it can produce large, itchy welts on the skin. Welts from bed bug bites do not have a red spot in the center – those welts are more characteristic of flea bites.



### How is it spread?

In most cases, bed bugs are transported from infested areas to non-infested areas when they cling onto someone's clothing, or crawl into luggage, furniture or bedding that is then brought into homes. They can live for weeks or months without feeding.

### How do I know if my home is infested with bed bugs?

If you have bed bugs, you may also notice itchy welts on you or your family member's skin. You may also see the bed bugs themselves, small bloodstains from crushed bed bugs, or dark spots from bed bug droppings in your home. Bed bugs often hide in or near beds and bedroom furniture, and in the tufts, seams, and folds of mattresses and daybed covers. In more severe infestations, bed bugs may spread to cracks and crevices in bed frames and box springs; behind headboards; inside nightstands; behind baseboards, window and door casings, pictures, and moldings; and in nearby furniture, loosened wallpaper, and cracks in plaster and flooring. Bed bugs may also hide in piles of books, papers, boxes, and other clutter near sleeping areas.

### How can I get rid of bed bugs?

The best method to deal with bed bugs is Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which combines a variety of techniques and products that pose the least risk to human health and the environment.

1. Consult with your local health department or a professional Pest Control operator to confirm that you have bed bugs.
2. Inspect your mattress and bed frame, particularly the folds, crevices and the underside, and other locations where bed bugs like to hide.
3. Use a nozzle attachment on the vacuum to capture the bed bugs and their eggs. Vacuum all crevices on your mattress, bed frame, baseboards and any objects close to the bed. It is essential to vacuum daily and empty the vacuum immediately.

4. Wash all your linens in the hottest water possible and place them in a hot dryer for 20 minutes. Consider covering your pillows and mattress with a plastic cover.
5. Remove all unnecessary clutter.
6. Seal cracks and crevices between baseboards, on wood bed frames, floors and walls with caulking. Repair or remove peeling wallpaper, tighten loose light switch covers, and seal any openings where pipes, wires or other utilities come into your home (pay special attention to walls that are shared between apartments).
7. Monitor daily by setting out glue boards or sticky tape (carpet tape works well) to catch the bed bugs. Closely examine any items that you are bringing into your home.
8. Consult professional pest control services and discuss options that pose the least risk to humans and the environment.

If you choose to treat the infestation with an insecticide, call a Professional Pest Control Service for more information. Use the least toxic product available and follow all manufacturers' instructions.

Whether you choose Integrated Pest Management or insecticides, you may continue to see some living bed bugs for up to ten days. This is normal. If you continue to see a large number of bed bugs after two weeks, contact a professional pest control service.

### **How can I prevent an infestation of bed bugs?**

- Although even the cleanest homes and hotels can have bed bugs, regular house cleaning, including vacuuming your mattress, can help to prevent an infestation. Clean up clutter to help reduce the number of places bed bugs can hide.
- Be careful when buying used furniture or clothes. Make sure to inspect the used item, and feel free to ask the retailer if the items were checked for bed bugs.
- Use caution when bringing home used furniture or clothes from the curb side. These items may be infested with bed bugs.
- When travelling take the following precautions:
  - Inspect the room and furniture: inspect all cracks and crevices of the mattress and box spring, and look for blood spots or live insects. Request a different room if you find evidence of bed bugs.
  - Protect your luggage: keep all belongings in your luggage and wrap your luggage in plastic to help prevent bed bugs from entering your luggage. Keep luggage on the shelf or away from the floor.
  - Protect the bed: move the bed away from the wall, tuck in all bed sheets and keep blankets from touching the floor.
  - Upon returning home: keep your luggage in an isolated area of your home, such as the garage. Inspect the luggage. Wash all your clothes in the hottest water possible and put them in a hot dryer for 20 minutes.

### **For more information go to:**

[MDCH Bed Bug Manual](#)  
[More Bed Bug Resources](#)

This fact sheet is not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Parents should contact their healthcare provider if they have concerns regarding their child's health. If you have general questions, you may contact an Allegan County Public Health Nurse at 269-673-5411.