

## **Bed Bugs (*Cimex lectularius L.*) adapted from Columbia University Information**

Bed bugs are nocturnal parasites that dine on the blood of sleeping humans. These tiny pests (adults are about 1/4 of an inch long and resemble apple seeds) hide in nooks and crannies and come out late at night to feed. Signs that you've been bitten are clusters of small welts with dark red centers, often found on the upper body. Although the bites are irritating and in large numbers may produce rashes and significant discomfort, bed bugs aren't known to transmit any diseases to people; they're considered more of a nuisance than a serious health threat.

**Bed bugs live just about anywhere and spread easily. If you see any of the following signs, these pests may have taken up residence with you:**

- Brownish stains (from feces) around hiding places, including the bed frame, mattress cover, or cracks in doors, window frames, or walls around the bed
- Brown exoskeletons that bed bugs molt every two months during their approximately ten month lifespan
- Tiny spots of blood on sheets or bedding (the result of squishing an engorged bed bug)

**Do-it-yourself suggestions for bed bug removal include:**

- Start by washing/drying all of your bedding in hot water or a high-heat dryer (120°F or higher).
- Steam clean any non-washable furniture or carpeting.
- Vacuum, vacuum, vacuum (especially crevices in and around baseboards and bed frames).
- Expose infested bedding and other fabric items to extreme heat (i.e., leave them in a hot car or spin them for at least 20 minutes on a high-heat dryer) or cold (i.e., store them in a freezer) for a few days.
- Put mattresses/box springs in approved zippered cases for at least a year until all bed bugs have died.

**Prevention tips include:**

- When traveling, be vigilant in checking hotel furniture (as well as your luggage when you're checking out) for signs of bed bugs.
- Thoroughly inspect and/or steam clean any used furniture you bring into your home.
- Avoid places that are known to have infestations (since bed bugs may hitch a ride on your clothing).
- Reduce clutter that could allow more hiding spaces for bed bugs.

If you suspect that you have bed bugs, the best way to get rid of them may be to call an exterminator. Insecticides approved for bed bugs may help, but try to take precautions when using chemicals especially near beds. This may pose health hazards for children or those with breathing problems. Chemical treatment, often the most surefire way to eradicate bed bugs, should be done by professionals.

**Contact the Student Health Center:**

- When you have concerns about a severe rash or allergic reaction

**For more information go to:** The Mayo Clinic website: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/bedbugs/DS00663>

Orkin Pest Control website: <http://www.orkin.com/other/bed-bugs/>