



Bed Bugs

Fact Sheet for Renters

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on blood. Adult bed bugs have flat, rusty-red-colored oval bodies about the size of an apple seed, although young ones are small like a poppy seed. When bed bugs feed, their bodies swell and become bright reddish brown. They usually are active at night.

Are bed bugs dangerous?

While bed bugs are a nuisance, they are not known to spread disease.

What does the bite look and feel like?

Most bed bug bites are painless, but later can turn into itchy skin welts. These welts do not have a red spot in the center like flea bites.

How does a home become infested?

In most cases, people unknowingly carry bed bugs into their homes – on luggage, furniture, bedding, or clothing. To reduce the risk, wash all travel clothing and bedding immediately after returning from a trip. Inspect used furniture for bed bugs before bringing it into your home/apartment. And never bring discarded bed frames, mattresses, box springs, or upholstered furniture into your home.

Bed bugs also may travel between apartments through small crevices and cracks in walls and floors.

How do I know if my home is infested?

It may be hard to spot bed bugs because they often hide in cracks in furniture, floors, or walls. You may notice you have itchy skin welts before you notice the bugs themselves. You also may find their eggs, small bloodstains from crushed insects, or dark spots from their droppings.

How can I get rid of bed bugs?

Notify your landlord immediately if you suspect you have an infestation. Your landlord must inspect for bed bugs within 5 days of receiving your notice. If bed bugs are found, your landlord must contact a pest control agent within 10 days and take reasonable steps to treat the infestation.

You must provide reasonable access to your landlord and the pest control agent to inspect for bed bugs and treat the area.

What else can I do?

Find out where bed bugs are hiding. Use a bright flashlight to look for signs of bed bugs in your bedroom. You can use a hot hair dryer to force them out of hiding places. Look in and around furniture, in the seams and tufts of your mattress, around windows and doors, in loose wallpaper or cracks in the wall or floors, and anywhere else that looks like a hiding place.

Clean infested items.

- Washable items should be cleaned in hot water and dried on the highest dryer setting.
- Scrub mattress seams with a stiff brush to remove bed bugs and their eggs. Cover the mattress and box spring with waterproof, zippered mattress covers labeled “allergen rated,” or “for dust mites.” Keep the covers on for at least one year.
- Vacuum everything in your bedroom, paying special attention to bed bug hiding places. Right after vacuuming, put the vacuum cleaner bag in a sealed plastic bag, and throw it away in an outdoor container.
- Dispose of infested items that can’t be cleaned. Make sure the items are sealed in plastic before moving them through your building or placing them in an outside container. Never resell or donate infested items.

Where can I get more information?

www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/14/title14sec6021-A.html outlines landlord and tenant responsibilities related to bedbugs. See also the Rights of Tenants in Maine by Pine Tree Legal Assistance, at www.ptla.org/ptlasite/cliented/tenants6.htm.

For more information about bed bugs generally, go to www.mainepublichealth.gov/bedbugs or contact Maine Center for Disease Control Office of Local Public Health at 1-207-287-6227.

