

# Bedbugs



## Description

- The bed bug (*Climex lectularius*) is a nocturnal insect that feeds on human blood.
- Adult bed bugs are about 5mm (1/4 inch) long.
- They are reddish brown in colour (becoming purple after feeding) with flat, oval bodies.
- They have short functionless wings and are therefore likely to be found close to their host. Their legs are well developed, enabling them to crawl up vertical surfaces.

## Lifestyle

- Bed bugs generally emerge to feed at night and are most active just before dawn.
- During the day they will hide in the darkness of the mattress or bed frame, behind wallpaper, pictures, skirting boards and furniture.
- Bed bugs take 3-10 minutes to engorge and can ingest up to seven times their body weight on one feed. However, they can survive for six months or longer without feeding.
- Depending upon the temperature and food supply, between two and four generations will be produced annually.
- The adult lays eggs at the rate of 3-4 per day which are cemented into cracks and crevices close to the host.

## Significance

Bed bugs feed on human blood by piercing the skin and sucking blood. Their bites, although painless, can cause severe irritation and inflammation which will differ according to the individual's sensitivity. In some cases this can also result in loss of sleep, lack of energy and listlessness, particularly in children. Bed bugs are not known to transmit disease. The spread of bed bugs is usually due to the movement of furnishings and furniture, personal belongings or luggage which has been transported from an infected area.

## Signs of Infestation

- An unpleasant sweet smell
- Blood spots on sheets and mattresses
- Hard, whitish, inflamed and irritation welts on the skin accompanied by severe itching which can last several days
- Black/brown speckling (bed bug faeces) in the area of harbourage.

## Control

Bed bug are challenging pests to control. The key is to locate and treat all cracks and crevices where bed bugs may be hiding, which may be some distance from the bed, including:

- Folds and seams in mattresses
- Bed frames and box springs
- Behind skirting boards, floorboards, window and door mouldings, pictures, electrical switch plates and loose wallpaper
- In the pleats of curtains and the upholstery of furniture

## **Try to avoid bringing infested items of furniture or luggage into your home**

When travelling in countries where bed bugs are prevalent, it is sensible to examine the bed and headboard area for signs of bugs and store luggage above the floor and away from the walls.

## **Treatment**

A full treatment of the furniture and room by a professional pest control company is advised to ensure a full and safe eradication. It often takes a number of hours to properly inspect and treat a bed bug infestation and follow-up visits are generally required. The premises should be thoroughly vacuumed prior to treatment and the dustbag thrown away immediately. All bed linen should be stripped and laundered in the hottest temperature possible. A thorough inspection of the area will be carried out before proceeding with treatment. All potential daytime harbourage areas must be located and treated with a low hazard insecticide registered for this purpose.

Eliminating bed bugs from a mattress is difficult, especially if there are holes or tears in the fabric. For this reason, pest control companies often recommend that infested beds are strapped in plastic and disposed of.

**Do not attempt DIY pest control using a surface spray on bed linen or mattresses as this could cause a health and safety danger.**

Spelthorne Borough Council does provide a service for the treatment of domestic premises infested with bedbug. Should you require a treatment, please contact Spelthorne's Customer Services on 01784 451499 to make a booking or alternatively e-mail [customer.services@spelthorne.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@spelthorne.gov.uk)

## **Advice Prior to Treatment**

- Vacuum throughout the premises, including cracks and crevices, and dispose of the dust-bag immediately after vacuuming.
- Once the treatment has been completed do not vacuum or clean the treated surfaces for **14 days** to allow the treatment to be effective.
- Clear the floor area as much as possible (toys, boxes, magazines, under beds and furniture etc.) to allow the Pest Control Officer to spray the floors.
- With bed bugs beds need to be treated. Strip the beds and wash bedding in the hottest temperature the fabric will allow (check manufacturers guidelines). The Pest Control Officer will also spray the mattress but beds may be slept in that night providing they are dry.
- Remove all persons and animals from the area being treated both during, and after the treatment for a minimum of two hours (or until the treated area is dry).
- Cover all fish tanks until the treatment has been completed.
- The treatment may smell slightly but this will disappear after a short while.

**TO ENSURE THE BEST RESULTS FORM THE TREATMENT AND TO DISCOURAGE RE-INFESTATION WE STRONGLY ADVISE YOU TO FOLLOW THIS ADVICE**