

BEDBUGS

What do bedbugs look like?

Bedbugs are wingless, oval-shaped, flattened insects, usually about 6mm long. When they have not eaten they are pale brown in colour but become reddish brown to mahogany when fully fed on blood. The head has large antennae and the mouthparts are well adapted for piercing the skin. Young bugs (nymphs) are nearly colourless, becoming brownish as they mature and moult five times before adulthood. Bedbugs can crawl up vertical surfaces of wood, paper and plaster, but are unable to crawl up smooth polished surfaces.

The Council provides information leaflets on the following range of pests:

Ants
Bedbugs
Cockroaches
Fleas
Flies
Mice
Pigeons
Rats
Slugs
Spiders
Wasps



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Where do they live?

Bedbugs are found wherever human beings sleep within a property. They can be carried into the home on luggage brought in after a stay in an infested hotel or dwelling. Bedbugs can also enter the home on second-hand furniture and in very rare cases, can be brought in on a person's clothes.

They are nocturnal and spend most of their time hiding in areas such as floor cracks, under carpets, behind loose wallpaper or pictures, loose skirting boards and door frames, and the surrounding structures of infested rooms. They commonly appear in the seams, piping and buttons of bed mattresses and on bedroom furniture.

Modern buildings often allow bedbugs to migrate along terraced houses and between flats, spreading the problem away from the original infestation.

What do they eat?

Bedbugs feed exclusively on blood, normally every 3-4 days and generally only in darkness. Although human blood is preferred, they can survive on blood from rabbits, dogs, cats and rodents etc. Bedbugs can survive extreme starvation and have been known to survive for up to 12 months without feeding.

What are the signs of infestation?

Aside from live sightings, evidence of faecal marks near cracks and crevices, on bed linen and bed frames can be signs of infestation. If there are bedbugs in sufficient numbers an unpleasant almond-like smell may be detected in infested rooms.

Are bedbugs a health hazard?

The close association of bedbugs with humans can cause a substantial nuisance through the blood feeding habits. Bites often result in a hard, white swelling – unlike flea bites, which leave a dark red spot. Itching caused by bites and the possibility of secondary infection caused by scratching is most common. If infestation is high then there can be a risk of anaemia.

Bedbugs are not known to be carriers of human disease.

How can I prevent bedbug infestation?

Bedbugs are often carried from infested premises in luggage, second hand furniture, etc. Careful inspection of these articles should be made if there are any doubts about their origin.

How can I get rid of bedbugs?

Treatment must be very thorough and should therefore be carried out by a professional.

The standard treatment for infested premises is the application of an insecticide approved for use against bedbugs. The insecticide should be applied to all cracks and crevices where bedbugs could be hiding, including the crevices of bed frames, flooring, skirting boards etc. Mattresses can be lightly sprayed with a water-diluted spray. All bed linen should be washed at the hottest temperature that the material will allow.

It is recommended to avoid vacuuming for seven days after treatment.

When using insecticides, always follow the manufacturer's safety instructions. Do not use insecticide dusts on beds.

After treatment has been carried out it is important to monitor for several weeks to ensure that the treatment has been successful.

Seek professional advice from the Council's Environmental Health Service if you require any assistance.

Warning: Use biocides safely. Always read the label and product information before use.

