

Bed Bugs (*Cimex lectularius*)

Bed bugs are small, **parasitic insects that feed on the blood of humans and animals** while they sleep. Adult bed bugs are about ¼ inch in length, about the **size of an apple seed**. They are oval and flat. Bed bugs can be off-white to light tan, deep brown or burnt orange in color. The host's dark blood may be apparent in the body of the bug. **Bed bugs cannot fly.**

Bed bugs **can be found worldwide** and have been reported more frequently in recent years. They most often are found in rooms where people sleep, and generally reside on or near beds or other furniture used for sleeping. Bed bugs are typically inactive during the day.

Bed bugs are **not known to transmit any infectious diseases**. Bed bugs generally bite during the night while hosts are asleep. While feeding, the bugs inject their saliva, which contains an anesthetic and an anticoagulant, into the skin, so their **bites are painless**.

Bed bugs are not spread person-to-person. Bed bugs can survive for months without feeding, so they may be present in apparently vacant and clean apartments, hotels or other types of residences. Bed bugs can spread as long as a host is living with them.

Preparing for Home Visits

Always **wear simple clothing** when visiting a client's home. Avoid shirts with buttons and pockets (professional looking, long-sleeved, light-colored T-shirts are best). Avoid cargo pants or pants with cuffs. Simple shoes that can be thrown in a hot dryer and have minimal tread are also best. **Do not accessorize** with anything, particularly scarves, jewelry or handbags.

If possible, **contact the client prior to the first home visit** and ask them if they have had any known insect infestation or pest control treatment within the last two to three months. If their answer is yes, ask them specifically about bed bugs. If bed bugs were a problem within the last 12 months, you can **take precautions** to protect yourself and your other clients before arriving at the potentially infested residence.

After You Arrive

- **Wear protective booties** at all times or at least when you are uncertain about the presence of bed bugs in the client's home. If asked about the booties, let the client know that you are trying to protect from insects that can be transferred between residences.
- **Coveralls or a Tyvek® suit** can be worn if you are entering a home where you know there are bed bugs. Coveralls should also be considered if you know that you will be moving or carrying items, people or animals from an infested home.
- **Do not sit on upholstered furniture or the bed.** Take a quick look in the cracks of hard chairs before sitting down, or better still, bring your own chair when you visit.
- **Carry only those items with you that are essential** to the home visit. Leave everything else in the car. A plastic clipboard can be used to hold your paperwork. A fanny pack can be used to hold your wallet, personal items, spare gloves, and booties.
- **Avoid** placing anything on upholstered furniture, bedding or on carpeted floors.
- If you discover bed bugs in the home during your visit, remain calm:

- **Record the presence of bed bugs** in your notes so you will be prepared for the next visit.
- When you return to your vehicle, **remove** your booties immediately and **seal** them in a plastic bag. **Dispose** of the bag before you get in the car.
- If you were wearing coveralls or a Tyvek® suit, remove it by turning it inside out to trap any bed bugs inside.
- Place the suit in a sealed plastic bag and dispose of it before you get in the vehicle.
- Have a hand mirror available so that you can perform a quick **self-inspection**. Check your clothing (the back of your pants, tread of your shoes, shoelaces, socks, cuffs, and collar).
- If you find a bed bug on yourself, use a “wet wipe” to **capture the bug**. Use another “wet wipe” to wipe down the surrounding area, paying attention to seams, buttons and other bed bug hiding places. Wipe downs are not necessary if you do not find any bugs during your self-inspection.

If You Are Repeatedly Visiting Infested Homes

Protect yourself and other clients by always wearing booties and protective coveralls and using a **bed bug containment kit**. The kit should include:

- A portable, **hard surface chair** or stool
- A **fanny pack** for holding personal items like your identification, cell phone, additional booties or gloves
- A **change of clothes** and shoes (kept in your vehicle)
- A **plastic storage container** with a sealed lid that is large enough to contain the items listed below or items that you might suspect to be infested
 1. Protective booties and Tyvek® type coveralls
 2. Disposable gloves
 3. A roll of duct tape (light colored)
 4. Small plastic garbage bags
 5. A roll of 50-gallon garbage bags (drum liners)
 6. Flashlight
 7. Narrow banded spatula (for crushing bed bugs)
 8. A fresh container of wet wipes (i.e., Wet Ones Antibacterial)
 9. Plastic box-type clipboard containing paper and pens

Transporting Someone Who Had Bed Bugs on Their Clothes or Belongings

If you must remove or transport a child or client from a home with bed bugs, you need to **contain their belongings to protect your vehicle**. Use your drum liners to bag your client’s clothes and personal items. Tie the drum liners and seal them in an empty plastic storage container inside your vehicle prior to transport. If you need to transport a potentially infested wheelchair, wrap it in your drum liners before putting it in the car. The wheelchair can be uncovered and used immediately when you arrive at your destination. **Drum liners can also be used as seat covers** to guard against bed bugs crawling off the client’s clothing during transport.

If you need to transport someone who has obvious bed bugs on his or her clothing, you can use your Tyvek® suit and booties to cover the client’s clothing during transport. However, if your client does not want to wear coveralls, have them sit on the drum liner seat cover. You should then **vacuum the vehicle** once you have

reached your destination. You can also use **wet wipes on the seatbelts and seat seams** to remove any bed bugs that crawled off the client.

Use the Dryer When Returning to the Home or Office

Heat is an excellent bed bug killer. A hot clothes dryer is effective for killing all bed bug life stages. **Remove** your work clothes as soon as you come home. Your clothes, including shoes, can be tumbled in the dryer on **high for 30 minutes** and emerge bed bug free. A dryer with a removable shelf is excellent for heating items that cannot be tumbled, like backpacks or other supplies.

If You Have Had Contact With Bed Bugs

If you have been in contact with bed bugs, notify your supervisor of the source and return to your home. **Remove** all clothing before entering the home if possible (or in the bathroom if not). **Place** your clothing in sealed plastic bags. Get into the **shower**. After showering, collect your sealed items and place them in the **washer with hot soapy water**. Place shoes in a **hot dryer** for 30 minutes. **Dry your clothes on high heat.**

Additional Suggestions

- **Keep your vehicle clear of clutter, vacuum it weekly and inspect it periodically for bed bug presence**
- Keep a **dedicated pair of shoes** for use only in clients' homes or a jacket in sealed plastic containers in your vehicle
- **Discourage** clients from sharing vacuum cleaners with other residents, as this is a potential source of infestation
- Bed bugs are excellent hitchhikers, so clients should be discouraged from accepting or borrowing clothing, furniture, or other items from friends and neighbors
- **Be prepared** to offer your clients basic bed bug information if they ask for it

For more information about the treatment of bed bugs, visit www.hhs.nd.gov/bedbugs. If you have further questions about the treatment of your bed bug bites, contact your health care provider.

Exclusion Guidance

Individuals with bed bugs should not be excluded from work, school, or child care unless the [General Exclusions Apply](#).

For additional information about bed bugs, contact North Dakota Health and Human Services' Public Health Division at 800.472.2180.

Resources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, September 22). Bed Bugs. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved May 24th, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/bedbugs/index.html>.
2. United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2023, May 15). Bed Bugs: Get Them Out and Keep Them Out. United States Environmental Protection Agency. Retrieved May 24th, 2023, <https://www.epa.gov/bedbugs>.
3. Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Bed Bug Action Plan for Home Health Care and Social Workers. Retrieved May 24th, 2023. www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pdf/bb-healthcare1.pdf.

6/15/23