



Article Link: <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/bedbugs-topic-overview>

## Bedbugs

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### Topic Overview

#### What are bedbugs?

Bedbugs are small, flat, and wingless insects. Like mosquitoes, they feed on blood from animals or people. The bugs range in color from almost white to brown. They turn rusty red after feeding.

The bugs get their name because they like to hide in bedding and mattresses. They usually hide during the day and are active at night when they feed. They can live for 10 months, and they can go weeks without feeding.

Bedbugs do not seem to spread disease to people. But itching from the bites can be so bad that some people will scratch enough to cause breaks in the skin that get infected easily. The bites can also cause an allergic reaction in some people.

See a picture of a bedbug .

#### Where can you find bedbugs?

Bedbugs are found worldwide, but they are most common in developing countries. Once rare in North America and Europe, bedbugs may be on the rise in these areas.

Bedbugs are most often found in hotels, motels, hostels, shelters, and apartment complexes where large numbers of people come and go.

Because bedbugs hide in small crevices, they can come into your house on luggage, furniture, clothing, pillows, boxes, and other objects. The bugs can hide in beds, floors, furniture, wood, and paper trash during the day.

#### How do you know if you have bedbugs?

The first sign of bedbugs may be red, itchy bites on the skin, usually on the arms or shoulders. Bedbugs tend to leave straight rows of bites, unlike some other insects that leave bites here and there.

Look also for these other signs:

- The bugs themselves, especially along the seams of mattresses.

- Tiny bloodstains on sheets and mattresses.

- Dark spots of insect waste where bedbugs might crawl into hiding places on furniture, walls, and floors.

- A sweet odor from bedbugs' scent glands where bedbugs are found in large numbers.

#### How do you get rid of bedbugs?

To get rid of bedbugs:

- Remove debris, such as wood and paper trash piles, where these bugs may hide.

- Wash, vacuum, or clean all furniture and bedding. Be sure to vacuum cracks in wood doors or floors where bugs may hide.

Put small things like jewelry boxes, pillows, and stuffed animals in a dark plastic bag, and leave them outside in the hot sun for 2 or 3 days.

Get rid of mattresses and box springs that have bedbugs. If you cannot throw them out, then cover the mattress and box springs with a plastic mattress bag that traps the bugs.

Wash clothes and bedding in hot water, and dry them with the hot cycle of the clothes dryer.

Use a bug spray or other insecticide in cracks in floors or bed frames where you think bugs could hide. Check with a garden or hardware store for the right spray to kill the bugs. Read and carefully follow directions for using any insecticide.

If you cannot get rid of the bedbugs yourself, you can call an insect control company for treatment choices.

When the bugs are gone, be sure to keep your house and bedding clean to prevent the bugs from coming back.

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