

Snug as a Bug in a Rug

Prevent Bed Bugs from Making Themselves
Comfortable in your School

The bed bug (*Cimex lectularius*) is a notorious pest making its home in Utah. Bed bugs nearly vanished in the United States after World War II, existing only in small, isolated populations. However, the bed bug population has been making a comeback in the United States in the last decade due to the increase in international travel and commerce.

What do bed bugs look like?

Adult bed bugs are reddish-brown in color with oval-shaped bodies covered with short, golden hairs. They lack wings and are therefore unable to fly. Adult bed bugs are about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch in length (about the size of a pencil eraser), with relatively flat bodies. After feeding, they may appear dark red in color and elongated. Because the bed bug is very similar in appearance to the bat bug (*C. pilosellus*) and other members of this blood-sucking family in Utah, it is important to seek professional help for identification before taking further action.

In the average lifespan of 6 to 18 months, a female may lay from 200 to 500 eggs. Eggs are pearly white and only about 1 millimeter in length (about the size of a pinhead). They are laid in crevices, in clusters of varying numbers, and hatch in about 10 days.

Immature bed bugs look very similar to adults, but are smaller and lighter in color. The young reach adulthood in 5 to 8 weeks at room temperatures. They shed their skins five times before becoming adults. Every life stage must take a blood meal before shedding their skins and growing.



Above:
Adult bed bug (Gary Alpert, Harvard University, Bugwood.org)

Right:
Bed bug eggs (Gary Alpert, Harvard University, Bugwood.org)



Did You Know?

- Bed bugs are common in Utah!
- Bed bugs have been found in hotels, hospitals, college dorms, airports, planes, movie theaters, homes, and in schools.
- Bed bugs mostly feed at night, but can also feed during the day.
- Most adult bed bugs can survive 3-6 months without food at room temp.
- Bed bug infestations can be very hard to control.
- Dogs can be professionally trained to locate bed bugs with ~ 98% accuracy.



Below:
Bed bug bites are small, red, and itchy (Fletcher et al. 2002).



Above:
Dark spots (bed bug excrement) on furniture are indicative of bed bugs (Gary Alpert, Harvard University, Bugwood.org).



Feeding

The common bed bug will feed on a variety of animals, but prefers humans. They feed for about 10 minutes at night, while their victim is sleeping, before retreating back to a harborage to digest the meal.

The Bite

Initially the bite is painless. Bed bugs are known to bite all over the body, especially exposed areas of skin. Sometimes, a red bump will form at the feeding site associated with minor swelling and itching. People tend to have a range of reactions to bed bug bites—some are unaffected while others may develop an allergic reaction. Reactions to bed bug bites can be immediate, or delayed by over a week. Fortunately, bed bugs are not known to transmit disease to humans.

Because bed bug bites are not unique, it is not possible to diagnose a bed bug infestation from a bite alone. The presence of bed bugs must be confirmed by inspecting the area carefully.



Managing Bed Bugs with Integrated Pest Management

- Create a bed bug action plan in advance so that all parties involved will respond appropriately, effectively, and quickly. A plan will minimize social stigma for children and eliminate introductions as quickly as possible. For more information on developing a bed bug action plan, see the link on the right.
- Inspect and monitor areas with upholstered furniture such as the faculty lounge, office area, and nurse's office. Potential trouble spots include child care facilities and dormitories.
- Inspect donations, lost and found items, and coat lockers. Student back-packs and coats are primary routes of bed bug introduction in schools.
- Remove clutter. Vacuum to remove bed bugs and debris that may serve as shelter. Do not spread bed bugs to new rooms with a vacuum.
- Dispose of infested clothing or treat it in a hot dryer (140°F) for at least 20 minutes.
- **Pesticide use alone is not recommended.**

For more info, check out:

Bed Bug Action Plan for Schools:

<http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pesticides/pdf/files/bb-schools1.pdf>

"Bat Bugs, Bed Bugs and Relatives":

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05574.html>

EPA IPM in Schools: www.epa.gov/pesticides/ipm

