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## Health and Safety Alert Bed Bugs



Bed bugs are becoming a challenging problem in residences of all kinds, including homes, apartments, hotels, dormitories and shelters. Bed bugs feed by sucking blood from humans and animals. While their bites are not known to spread disease, they can be very itchy and create a great deal of discomfort. Infestations have proven to be very difficult to eradicate.

### **Background Information**

Bed bugs are approximately 3/16 to 1/5 of an inch in size. They are flattened and oval and resemble an apple seed with legs. They are wingless creatures so they do not fly, but they are able to slowly climb walls and move across ceilings. These bugs are clear in color prior to taking their first blood meal. Female bed bugs lay eggs while they walk and can lay up to 200 eggs in their lifetime, which is generally 10 months. Bed bugs tend to live in warm, dark places such as in tiny cracks in furniture or on textiles and upholstered furniture but they do not burrow or live under the skin. . They are common in areas where people sleep and will concentrate in beds, including mattresses, box springs, and bed frames

## Signs of Infestation

Bed bugs:

- Tend to leave a trail of blood in their tracks.
- May leave bug bites on their host.
- Make bites that tend to line up in a row, so side by side bites indicate multiple bed bugs.
- Cast off their skin as they grow. Since these casting will be found in problem areas, keep the casts to show the exterminator. These can be collected using clear tape.

## Health Related Information

- Bed bugs are not known to spread pathogens through their bites.
- Bed bug bites can be itchy and cause stress..
- Do not squish a bed bug as it will release the blood and any pathogens it may be carrying.

## Suggestions to Treat Bed Bug Bites

- Resist the urge to scratch the bites.
- Use calamine lotion to treat the bed bug bite. (Calamine is an OTC medication. Follow your agency's policy in regards to whether a doctor's order is required.)
- Apply an ice-pack to the affected area to help relieve any swelling and itching.
- Thoroughly disinfect the bites with antiseptic soap to reduce any risk of infection.
- See a doctor if an infection develops.

## Eradication

- Only use a reputable licensed exterminator (ask to see their license to ensure that it is current in NJ).
- Only use exterminators with specific prior experience and expertise in addressing bed bug infestations. An inappropriate strategy could make the problem worse. Ask for references.
- The infested area should be vacuumed and steam cleaned before chemicals are applied by the exterminator. **Note – before moving on to another room, change the vacuum bag and place it inside a second bag for disposal.**
- Ask to see and review the hazardous materials specification sheets prior to the use of the chemicals. This is to assure precautions are taken to keep people safe. Consult with the exterminator to assure that people in the residence are not endangered by the treatments.
- Infested bedding and garments will need to be bagged in the contaminated area and then laundered in water heated to a minimum of 120 degrees or discarded.
- In some cases the infested mattress and box springs will need to be discarded. To avoid spreading the infestation, wrap the items to be discarded in the infested area before transferring them from the house.
- Do not allow the items to be discarded to rest on stairs or other household surfaces when carried to the exterior of the building/house as the bugs/eggs may fall from the item and infest other areas.

- Be aware that treatment occurs in cycles to match the bed bug's incubation period (7 to 17 days depending on temperature).
- Maintain a log that notes where bed bugs were detected to guide the exterminator.
- When the extermination effort has been completed, repaint the walls in a light color or wash them with a solution that is 1 part bleach to 10 parts water. Light colored paint will allow you to see bugs and bug tracks more easily.

### **Proactive Measures**

- Follow laundry instructions as noted above when an individual is new to a residence or returns from vacation or respite away from the residence.
- Conduct periodic assessments of the residence, paying particular attention to bed linens, bed, switch plates, door jambs, and wall moldings.
- Place double sided carpeting tape on the floor near the beds. If bed bugs are present around the bed area, they will stick to the tape. This will assist you in identifying a possible infestation. If bugs are found on the tape, place it in a zip lock bag and keep it to show to the exterminator.
- Use plastic mattress covers for mattresses and box springs. Commercial bed bug proof covers are available.
- Do not allow bedding to touch the floor.
- To help reduce the possibility of spreading bed bugs, it could be helpful to encourage individuals to limit the number of belongings they take with them to day programs/sheltered work shops. Bed bugs can travel by hitching a ride on clothing, bags and other objects.

### **Disclaimer**

**This alert is intended to provide DDD staff and providers, families and individuals with information about bed bugs. At no time is this alert to substitute for training, nor does it suffice as training. Staff members that have been trained in how to address the issues of bedbug infestation still are required to implement their training.**

### **Helpful Resources**

National Pesticide Information Center-State Pesticide Regulatory Agency

[http://npic.orst.edu/state\\_agencies.html#nj](http://npic.orst.edu/state_agencies.html#nj)

National Center for Healthy Housing – What's Working for Bed Bug Control in Multifamily Housing: Reconciling best practices with research and the realities of implementation

[http://www.healthyhomestraining.org/ipm/NCHH\\_Bed\\_Bug\\_Control\\_2-12-10.pdf](http://www.healthyhomestraining.org/ipm/NCHH_Bed_Bug_Control_2-12-10.pdf)