

EDMONTON'S GUIDE TO PREVENTING & GETTING RID OF BED BUGS SAFELY



**A Guide for Property Owners,
Operators, Managers & Tenants**



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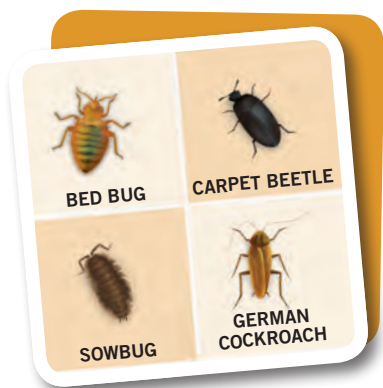
Using This Guide

Bed bug infestations are increasing in Edmonton. There are steps that can be taken to prevent bed bugs from infesting your home. When bed bugs are present, they can be safely controlled.

This guide will help you:

1. Learn more about bed bugs and how they thrive
2. Prevent bed bugs from infesting your home
3. Safely rid your home of bed bugs if they do occur
4. Select and work with a pest control operator

Recognizing a Bed Bug



From its appearance

Bed bugs are small insects that feed mainly on human blood. A newly hatched bed bug is semi-transparent, light tan in colour and the size of a pin head. Adult bed bugs are flat, have rusty-red coloured oval bodies and are about the size of an apple seed. Bed bugs may be confused with other small household insects including carpet beetles, sowbugs and newly hatched cockroaches (nymphs).

From its markings, droppings and eggs

Blood stains, droppings and eggs can be found in several locations including:

- Mattress seams and tufts, sheets, pillow cases and upholstered furniture.
- Crevices and cracks in furniture.
- Baseboards of walls.

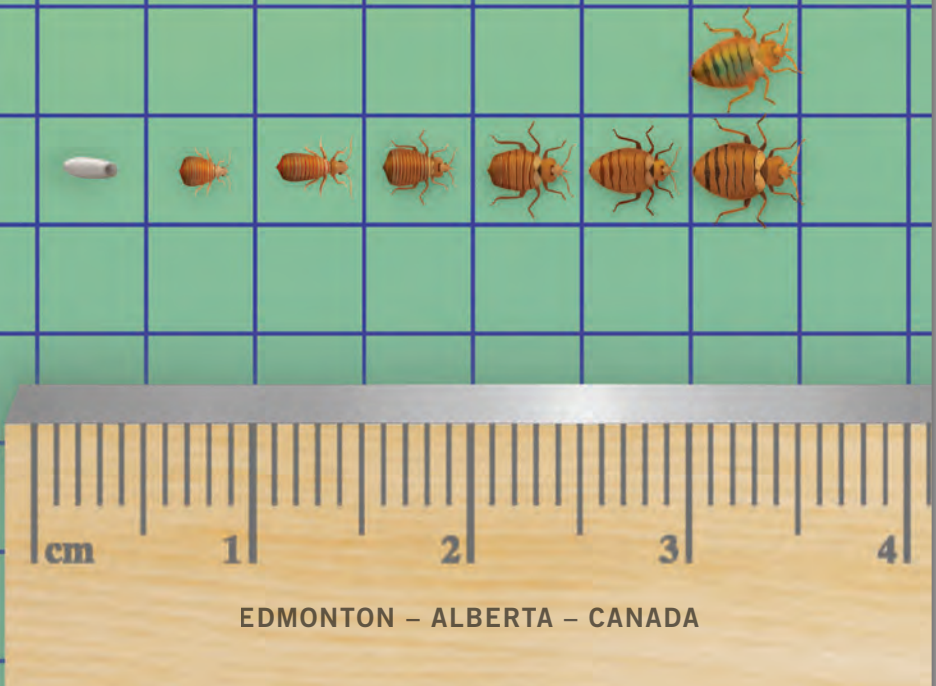
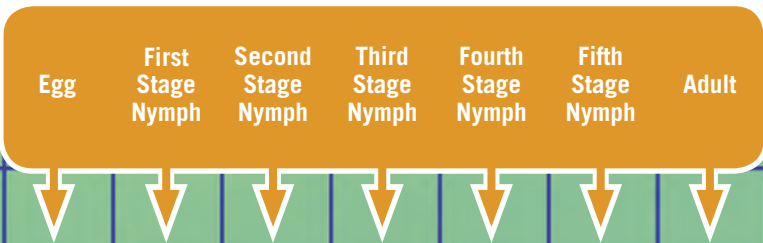
From its bite

Some people do not react to bed bug bites. But for those who do, bite marks may appear within days, usually where skin is exposed during sleep. They can be small bumps or large itchy welts. The welts usually go away after a few days. Because the bites may resemble mosquito and other insect bites, a bump or welt alone does not mean there are bed bugs.

How Bed Bugs Grow and Reproduce

Bed bugs are most active when we sleep. They crawl onto exposed skin, inject a mild anesthetic and suck up a small amount of blood. Most people never feel the actual bite.

Bed bugs need a blood meal to grow and lay eggs. To reach the adult stage, a bed bug must successfully obtain 5 blood feedings (one before advancing to each next stage of growth.) A female lays 5 to 7 eggs per week and, if fed, will lay 200 to 500 eggs in her life. Eggs take about 10 days to hatch. Bed bugs are fully grown in 2 to 4 months and can live as long as a year.



The Health Effects of Bed Bugs

Although bed bugs and their bites are a nuisance, they are not known to spread disease.

Bed bug bites can be very itchy and irritating. Most welts heal in a few days but in unusual cases, the welt may persist for several weeks. Usually an anti-itching ointment will help. Consult a pharmacist if itching persists or a doctor if bites become infected.

The anxiety about being bitten can lead to sleeplessness, which can affect one's wellbeing. Properly and effectively responding to bed bugs helps to keep anxiety in check.

Some people become so desperate that they use illegal or excessive amounts of pesticides that can lead to poisonings. This guide provides advice on how to get rid of bed bugs safely.

Preventing Bed Bugs from Infesting Your Home



Bed bugs can enter homes by latching onto used furniture, luggage, shoes and clothing, and can travel along connecting pipes and wiring.



Never bring bed frames, mattresses, box springs or upholstered furniture found on the street into your home. Check all used or rented furniture for bed bugs.

When traveling, inspect the bed and furniture. Keep suitcases off the floor and bed and inspect them before you leave.



If you suspect you have been around bed bugs, immediately dry your clothing on the hottest setting for 30 minutes or store it in a sealed plastic bag until you can put clothing in the dryer.

Seal cracks and crevices in walls and baseboards with caulk even if you don't have bed bugs. This will help prevent bed bugs and other pests from coming in.

Inspecting for Bed Bugs

Look for bed bugs, blood stains, droppings and eggs (a flashlight and a magnifying glass will help). Start by looking in an area 3 to 4 metres (10 to 20 feet) around where you sleep or sit. That's the distance a bed



Check mattresses, box springs, bed frames and bedding

- Check the top and bottom seams, under mattress buttons and any rips on the surface of mattresses and box springs.
- Replace any mattress covers that have rips or holes in them.
- Look on the under side of the bed and along the bed frame and headboards.

Check walls and wall hangings

- Using a thin putty knife or playing card, check paintings, posters, pictures and mirrors.
- Check cracks in plaster and peeling wallpaper.
- Inspect the face plates of electrical outlets and light switches (by eye only – do not insert anything into areas with wires). Look in phones, clocks, smoke detectors and toys.

bug will usually travel. Keep a written record of every room and location where you find signs of bed bugs. Share this record with your Landlord and/or pest control operator.



Check cracks and crevices in the bedroom furniture, floor boards and baseboards, windows and door frames

- Use a flashlight to inspect cracks and crevices of furniture, windows and door frames.
- Swipe a thin putty knife or playing card into cracks and crevices to force bed bugs out. A hot blow-dryer on a low setting will also work. If live bugs do come out, crush them with a paper towel, place in a sealed bag and throw them in the garbage outside your building.
- Remove drawers from furniture and check the inside, top and bottom joints and look even in screw holes.
- Remove and check zippers, seams and tufts (or buttons) in cushions of upholstered furniture and their frames.

Tools You Can Use



Bright flashlight.

Small mirror, ideally one with a handle available from hardware stores.

Magnifying glass.

Paper towels.

Thin putty knife or playing card.

Garbage bags.

Vacuum with crevice tool, brush and plenty of vacuum bags (it is recommended a portable vacuum be used and, when storing, wrap the hose opening with a plastic bag).

Plastic packing tape, double-sided carpet tape.

Bucket of soapy water and sponge.

Trap and Kill Bed Bugs

Force bed bugs out of cracks and crevices with a thin putty knife or playing card. Catch them with sticky packing tape or crush them in paper towels, seal in a bag and dispose in a garbage bin outside.





Seal Cracks and Crevices

- repair cracks in plaster, repair or remove any loose wall paper and tighten light switch covers.
- apply caulk to seal crevices and joints in baseboards
- apply caulk to seal gaps on shelving or cabinets

Getting Rid of Bed Bugs

If you have bed bugs, you shouldn't feel ashamed. Anyone can get bed bugs. Notify your landlord and/or contact an approved pest control operator immediately. The sooner everyone responds, the more successful everyone will be.

Tenants whose landlords do not promptly respond to bed bug complaints (within a reasonable time period) can file a complaint with Alberta Health Services at 780-735-1800 and may also hire their own professional pest control operator.

Control Measures

A bed bug infestation can happen to anyone and control measures must be started as soon as possible and continued until the bed bugs are gone from your home. It may require several weeks of inspecting your home for bed bugs (see pages 6-7).

Having bed bugs is stressful. Getting rid of them requires lots of hard work and extra expense. You will be more successful if you use a combination of physical and chemical control measures.

It is important to use only trained and certified professionals to apply chemicals for bed bug control.

1. Physical Control Measures

This must be done as soon as possible and on an on-going basis until the bed bugs are gone (several weeks). It is important this is done before any chemical controls are used.

A. De-clutter your home.

- Throw away items you no longer need or use. This will reduce places bed bugs can hide.
- Put items you don't use everyday into storage until the bed bugs are gone. Check all items again before bringing them back into your home.
- It is not usually necessary to get rid of furniture, mattresses or box springs at the first signs of bed bugs. Mattresses and box springs can be encased in bed bug proof covers.
- Your pest control operator will advise you if you need to discard any furniture. See page 18 for how to get rid of highly infected items.

B. Washing & Drying

- Wash all items showing bed bug stains in the washer (40-60C or 140F, hottest temperature) and put in the dryer on the hottest setting for at least 30 minutes.
- All clothing, linens, drapes and other fabric items must be placed in a hot dryer for 30 minutes to kill bed bugs and their eggs. If you cannot do this right away, place the items in a bag until you are able to.
- After drying, store items in tightly sealed plastic containers/bags until you are sure the bed bugs are gone from your home.





C. Vacuuming:

- Vacuum everywhere, especially where bed bugs mostly hide (see pages 6-7) daily.
- Use a crevice tool when vacuuming seams, folds, edges of furniture and mattresses.
- Empty the vacuum cleaner into a plastic bag, seal it and dispose of it outside.

D. General Cleaning:

- Wipe off dead bed bugs, blood stains, eggs and droppings with hot soapy water, especially around where you sleep. *This allows you to see new bed bug activity.*
- Place infested mattresses and box springs in a zippered cover designed for bed bugs for at least one year. Check for rips or openings regularly and tape these closed. *Bed bugs do not chew holes in things.*



E. Make your bed an island:

- Move your bed at least 30 centimetres away from the wall.
- Place interceptors (purchased or home made) under bed legs to prevent bed bugs crawling from the floor into your bed. *Bed bugs don't like climbing on smooth, shiny or sticky surfaces.*
- Home made interceptors may be made using :
 - double-sided sticky tape wrapped around the bed legs.
 - petroleum jelly applied as a coating on the bed legs.
 - smooth sided containers with vegetable oil or talcum powder in the bottom placed under the bed legs.
- Remove bed skirts and do not allow your bed covers to touch the floor.
- Do not put coats, clothing, purses etc. on the bed.

It is not usually necessary to get rid of furniture or bedding at the first signs of bed bugs. Cleaning and enclosing mattresses and box springs in bed bug proof covers is often enough.

Mattresses and box springs only need to be discarded if they are heavily infested and cannot be completely enclosed in a bed bug proof cover.



Any items to be discarded, including box springs and mattresses, should be encased with plastic sheeting (shrink/pallet wrap) or placed in plastic bags and tied securely, and labeled with a sign that says “infested with bed bugs” or broken to make sure they are unusable.

Infested items should NOT be given to others to spread the problem.

2. Chemical Control Measures

Pesticides used to control bed bugs and other pests must be approved for use by Health Canada (Federal government) and will have a Pest Control Product Registration Number. A product is only considered approved for use if it specifically names the pest and where to use it on the label. For example, a pesticide used to control bed bugs must identify “Bed Bugs” and have directions “for use in the home” on the label. It is important to follow label directions. Too heavy of an application may act as a repellent and the bed bugs will avoid the treated area. Too light of an application will not be effective to kill the bed bugs.

It is important to read and follow label directions. Overuse or too much chemical spray can be a danger to you and your family. Consider using a professional pest control operator approved by Alberta Environment to apply chemicals.

Choosing and working with an Approved Pest Control Operator

Bed bug infestations usually require the services of a well-trained, licensed pest control operator, also called exterminators. Professional pest control operators must be approved by Alberta Environment.

Ask the professional to:

- Use the least-toxic pesticide labeled for bed bugs that will be effective
- Ensure all instructions and warnings on product labels are followed
- Tell you when it's safe to re-enter a treated room
- Let you know if and when another treatment will be necessary
- Tell you when you can start your weekly cleaning

What Can Be Done to Support the Work of a Professional

Everyone should learn how to identify bed bugs and inspect for them. Cleaning and disinfecting will help to reduce bed bugs and their spread but may not get rid of them totally.

3. Weekly Cleaning Measures

Get rid of clutter to reduce places bed bugs can hide. After checking them for bed bugs, consider putting non-essential belongings into storage until the bed bugs are gone from your home. Check all items again before returning.

Wipe off dead bugs, blood stains, eggs and droppings with hot soapy water.

Wash all items showing bed bug stains in hot water (40-60°C or 140°F) and dry on the highest setting for at least 30 minutes. Other clean items suspected of having bed bugs should be placed in a hot dryer for at least 30 minutes to kill bed bugs. After drying, store items in sealed plastic bags until you are sure you have gotten rid of the bed bugs.



Vacuum carpets, floors (3 – 6 centimetre strip along walls), bed frames, furniture, cracks and crevices daily, using the brush and crevice tools. Empty the vacuum and/or seal and dispose of its bag outside of your home after each use.

Enclose infested mattresses and box springs in a cover that is labeled “for bed bugs” for at least a full year. Periodically check for rips or openings and tape these closed.

Keep your bed an island by moving it 30 centimetres away from the wall (see page 11).



What Landlords and Building Managers Can Do

Provide tenants with information about bed bugs. **Share this guide.**

Encourage everyone to report bed bugs as soon as they know of a problem.

Notify tenants and inspect all units adjacent to, above and below apartments found to have bed bugs.

Hire a professional pest control operator approved by Alberta Environment and/or heat treatment professional operator to treat for bed bugs. Be wary of companies that make unrealistic claims that bed bugs can be controlled with one visit.



NOTICE

**Bed bugs were
found in a nearby
apartment.**

**Please contact
landlord for an
inspection of your
apartment.**

Help tenants if they cannot move furniture themselves or need help to get rid of clutter.

Give advance notice of the planned use of pesticides.

Inspect upon vacancy and if necessary treat units to ensure they have no bed bugs or other pests before renting.

Be proactive and inspect units/suites/homes on a regular basis.

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Key Messages about Bed Bugs

Learn to identify the signs of bed bugs.

Dirty living conditions do not cause bed bugs but cleaning and removing clutter will help in controlling them.

Anyone can get bed bugs; seek help immediately if you find them.

Sealing cracks and small holes will help to reduce hiding places and prevent bed bugs from crawling between apartments.

Cooperate with your neighbours, landlord and pest control operator; getting rid of bed bugs needs to involve everyone.

Use only approved pesticides and be cautious how they are used, you can make your condition worse.

It is hard, but not impossible to get rid of bed bugs. The advice in this guide will help.

To purchase additional copies of this guide contact Edmonton Apartment Association at 780-413-9773 or see website below.

