

The Bed Bug

The bed bug (*Cimex lectularius*) has spread extensively around the world. It usually spreads via luggage via infested beds and furniture. It sucks blood from humans and animals at night. During the day it hides near the bed in dark cracks of furniture or on the slatted frame, under or on the mattress. Bed bugs have nothing to do with unsanitary conditions – anyone can be affected. In cases of infestation, only professional pest control will help.

Appearance

- Adults are about 4–6 mm long and flat, almost 10 mm long when fully fed, and reddish brown in color.
- Young bed bugs are smaller and lighter colored.



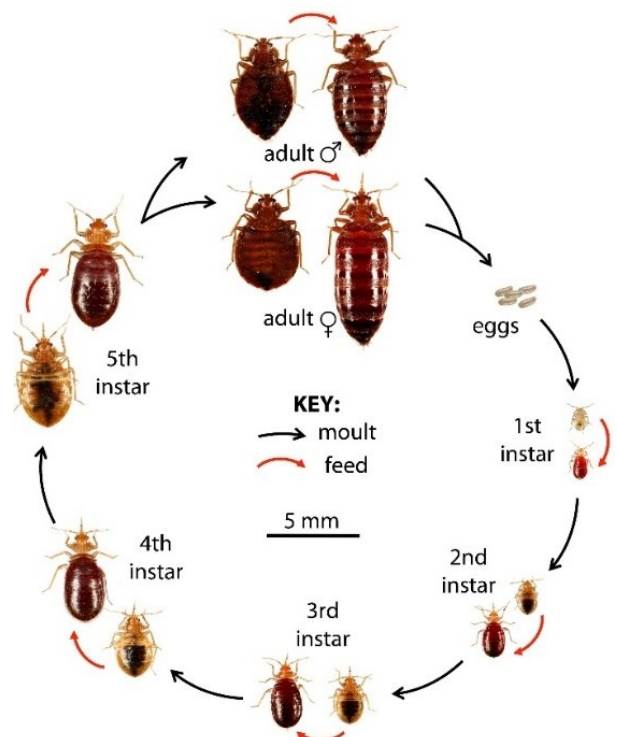
Adult bed bug feeding on blood. Photo: City of Zurich, Environmental and Health Protection

Significance and habits

- Sucks blood from humans and pets, especially at night.
- Hides in cracks of bed, furniture and rooms during the day.
- Can move from one apartment to the next, e.g. if attempts are made to control them with insect sprays.
- Female lays up to 500 eggs.
- Can withstand cold for a longer period of time and fast for up to 6 months.
- Lives about 1 year.

Damage

- Bites uncovered areas (neck, face, arms, ankles, etc.) at night.
- Itchy skin reactions often only hours or days after the bite.
- Around 20% of the population does not have skin reactions to bed bug bites.
- Transmission of diseases by bed bugs is still unknown.



Life cycle of the bed bug. Image: Bed Bug Foundation

Control

- Only control if bed bugs have actually been found.
- **Do not try to control with insect sprays yourself, this scares away the bugs, causes them to spread throughout the apartment or house.**
- Only by professional pest control with a Swiss federal certificate.
- The target must be complete eradication.
- In most cases, this requires more than one insecticide treatment. Alternatives: Heat or cold treatment, silicate dust, steam.
- **Treatment does not protect against reintro-
duction.**

Prevention

- Check used beds and furniture for bed bugs, droppings or traces of blood.
- Used moving boxes could also be infested with bed bugs.
- Wash secondhand clothes at 60°C or treat them at 45°C in a dryer.
- In case of bed bugs, do not deposit furniture in the stairwell, cellar or attic in order to prevent neighbors from getting bed bugs.
- If furniture is disposed of, please mark it clearly as **infested with bed bugs** or make it unusable so that other people do not take the furniture and bugs home.
- **If you are staying with relatives or acquaintances, make sure that you do not carry bedbugs with you in your luggage.**
- When moving into a hotel room or apartment, search the bed frame and slatted frame for live bed bugs or droppings (see image in adjacent column) with a strong flashlight.

How do you detect a bed bug infestation?

- During the day, hidden on the bed frame and in cracks close to the bed.
- Traces of droppings, small black dots (see image in adjacent column) or traces of blood on the bed linen.
- Searching the home with bed bug sniffer dogs can lead to more efficient and cheaper treatments.

What to do in case of bed bug infestation in a hotel room?

- Please inform the hotel managers.
- Demand another room, preferably not right next door.
- Place the suitcase as far away from the bed as possible and close all zippers.



Bedbug droppings on the slats of a heavily infested bed.
Photo: City of Zurich, Environmental and Health Protection

What to do after an overnight stay in a bugged room?

- Unpack your luggage on the balcony.
- If it is not possible to wash immediately, store your laundry in tightly tape-sealed garbage bags.
- Wash immediately at 60°C for 30 minutes or twice in a row at 40°C.
- Tumble dry for 30 minutes at 45°C.
- Place in a freezer at -17°C for several days.
- Spray the inside and outside of empty suitcases/bags outdoors with insecticide spray, then air well in the cellar or on the balcony.

Legal situation

Anyone who contracts a company must also cover the costs. The building owner or management must rent the apartment in good condition, free of vermin (see also the Swiss Code of Obligations, in particular according to tenancy law and the cantonal "Ordinance on General and Residential Hygiene"). If pests are present when moving into an apartment, this is considered to be a defect in the rented property. The landlord is responsible for remedying this defect. The costs cannot easily be passed on to the tenants. Articles 256, 257f, g, h, 258 and 259 of the Code of Obligations regulate the legal situation in residential properties.

We can help you

Call us, or send or bring us the insects for identification. Our consultation is free of charge and only for residents of the City of Zurich. Telephone office hours are Monday to Friday, 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

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