

BEDBUGS...THEY HAVE RETURNED!!

Bedbugs are small, wingless (true) insects that feed on the blood of warm-blooded animals, including humans. Certain kinds of these insects inhabit the nests of birds and bat roosts and await the return of the host to feed. Others have adapted well to living in the homes of people. Generally, bedbug larva or nymphs are about the size of a poppy seed, while the adults are around 1/4 of an inch in length or about the size of an apple seed.

The colors of the bedbug vary from nearly white (just after molting) to a light tan or burnt orange. When looking at a bedbug, the host's blood may appear as a dark mass within the insect's body. Although the bedbug does not fly, it can crawl, run and climb, but can not jump. From above, the bedbug is oval in shape, and is flattened from the top to bottom.

Bedbugs are nocturnal and generally seek out their hosts at night while they are asleep, and painlessly drink a few drops of blood. Attracted by warmth and the presence of carbon dioxide, the bug pierces the skin of its host with two hollow tubes. With one tube, it injects its saliva, which contains anticoagulants and anesthetics, while the other withdraws the blood of its host. The bites are not usually felt until some minutes or hours later, as a dermatological reaction to the injected agents, and the first indication of a bite usually comes from the desire to scratch at the bite site. The skin lesion produced by the bedbug is similar to those caused by other kinds of blood feeding insects, such as the mosquito and flea. Therefore, the offending insect can rarely be identified by the appearance of the bite alone. The affected person should resist the urges to scratch the bite sites, as this may intensify the irritation and itching, and may lead to possible secondary infections. Patients are often treated with antihistamines and corticosteroids to reduce the allergic reactions and inflammation. Despite popular opinion, bedbugs are not known to transmit any diseases, but are considered a public health nuisance.

Bedbugs and their relatives occur worldwide. They were thought to have been eradicated fifty years ago in the United States and elsewhere with the widespread use of DDT, but there has since been a resurgence in recent years. It is important to realize that bedbug infestations are not necessarily associated with areas that are dirty (but clutter can affect identification of your problem), but prominent in areas where people are transient, such as apartments, hotels, dorms, shelters, etc.

To best control a problem, set up an IPM (Integrated Pest Management Plan) with your pest control operator. This plan should detail the methods and insecticides to be used by the operator; it should describe the efforts expected by the client(s); it should include a copy of the labels and MSDS for the products and pesticides to be used; indicate how much time and how effective the treatment will be; and describe any repeat treatments and warranties the pest control operator provides, if any.