

Bedbugs

What are bedbugs?

Small insects that feed on human blood by biting through the skin. They are most active between 2:00 and 5:00 am. They can travel 10 to 15 feet to feed and go without feeding for up to 6 months. They cause itchy bites. Bedbugs are not known to transmit or spread disease.

What are the signs or symptoms?

- Itchy insect bites, which often occur in a row, on areas of skin that are exposed during the night.
- Bites often have a red dot where the bite occurred in the middle of a raised red bump.
- Bites typically occur on face, neck, arms, and hands.
- Look for specks of blood, rusty spots from crushed bugs, or dung spots the size of a pen point on bedsheets and mattresses or behind loose wallpaper.
- Look for reddish/brown live bugs, about 1/8 of an inch, in crevices or seams of bedding.

What are the incubation and contagious periods?

- Bedbugs do not reproduce on humans like scabies or lice. They bite humans at night, then hide in cracks or crevices on mattresses, cushions, or bed frames during the day.
- Children or staff members may bring bedbugs to school in book bags and outer garments and clothes.

How are they spread?

- Bedbugs are not spread on people. They are not a sign that people are dirty. They do need to feed on people and may hide in belongings or clothing that allow them to spread to others in group care settings.
- They crawl at the speed of a ladybug.

How do you control them?

- Avoid overreacting. One bedbug is not an infestation. It is not necessary to send the child home. An inspection and any pesticide application should be done by a trained pest control operator.
- Educate staff members and families about bedbugs.
- Reduce clutter and limit items that travel back and forth between homes and the facility.
- Seal cracks. Clean up any bedbug debris with detergent and water.
- Routinely separate the backpack and coat of one child from those of another child.

- Provide enough space between coat hooks so each child's belongings do not touch those of another child.
- Empty and clean cubbies, lockers, and child storage areas at least once every season.
- Extermination involves vacuuming and one of the following approaches: Application of the least toxic (preferably "bio-based") products, heating the living area to 122°F (50°C) for about 90 minutes, freezing infested articles, or (if necessary) use of synthetic chemical insecticides. Use Integrated Pest Management, which involves a combination of nonchemical strategies such as maintenance and sanitation followed by pesticides, if other methods are not effective.
- Laundering bedding and clothing (hot water and hot drying cycle for 30–60 minutes), vacuuming cracks and crevices, and freezing articles that may have been used as hiding places for bedbugs may reduce infestation until extermination can be performed. Vacuum with special attention to cracks and crevices in furniture, equipment, walls, and floors. Vacuuming some talcum powder will reduce the chance that the bugs will crawl out of the vacuum cleaner. Dispose of the vacuum cleaner filter and bags in a tightly sealed plastic bag.
- Use mattress, box spring, and pillow encasements to trap bedbugs. These encasements are readily available by searching the Internet for "mattress or pillow encasement." They are marketed for bedbug or allergy control.

What are the roles of the teacher/caregiver and the family?

- Usually the teacher/caregiver will not know which children with insect bites have been bitten by bedbugs because they are hard to distinguish from other insect bites.
- Children with bedbug bites are not infested and so do not require treatment to prevent spread to others.
- Fingernails should be kept short to avoid damaging and infecting the skin. Observe for signs of skin infection such as boils, abscesses, or cellulitis (see Quick Reference Sheet on 73). Draining lesions should be kept covered.
- Affected children can receive steroid skin creams or antihistamines to relieve the itch.

Exclude from group setting?

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