

Illinois Department of Public Health

Prevention & Control

Bed Bug Identification and Inspection

IDENTIFICATION

Bed bugs are flat, oval, wingless insects up to about one-fourth of an inch long. Unfed adults are reddish brown and resemble apple seeds in size and shape. Their bodies elongate after ingesting blood. Bed bug eggs are cylindrical and, like the newly hatched nymphs, about one-sixteenth of an inch long and somewhat translucent. Upon feeding, nymphs become bright red.

In most cases, pesticides and other control measures should not be applied until bed bugs are identified by an entomologist or other professional.



Adult bed bug

Photo: Armed Forces Pest Management Board

SIGNS OF INFESTATION



Bed bug nymphs before and after feeding

Photo: University of Minnesota

- Live or dead bed bugs
- Bed bug eggs (adhering to crevices)
- Shed exoskeletons (amber colored “shells”)
- Excrement (reddish brown to black specks and smears)
- Musty sweet odor (in heavily infested areas)

NOTE: The appearance of bed bug bites varies among individuals. Because there are many possible causes for skin reactions that resemble bites, the presence of marks consistent with bed bug bites

should be attributed to bed bugs only where specimens have been identified. Visible skin reactions may not appear for two weeks after bites, or they may not appear at all. It can be difficult to determine a bite's origin.

INSPECTION

Adequate lighting, a flashlight and a magnifying glass or hand lens are essential when inspecting for bed bugs. Infestations are often confined to the mattress, box springs and bed frame. Usually they are found within 20 feet of the bed. However, in heavily infested structures bed bugs can be found hiding in virtually any crevice or void. Some places to look for bed bugs are:

- Bed frames, mattresses, box springs
- Nightstands
- Couches and recliners
- Floor cracks and grooves
- Edges of rugs and carpeting, tack strips
- Loosened wallpaper and peeling paint
- Behind baseboards, wall and ceiling moldings
- Wall art and decorations
- Switches, outlets and smoke detectors
- Window and door frames
- Drapery and blinds