

# BEDBUGS



## What are Bedbugs?

Bedbugs (scientific name *Cimex Lectularius*) are small reddish-brown wingless insects, less than ¼ of an inch long, and shaped like flattened ovals. They usually ride into a home on used or second-hand furniture or luggage. They hide in narrow spaces, including the folds of mattresses, cracks and gaps in furniture, behind hanging pictures or loose wallpaper, under rugs, and behind baseboards. At night, they come out to feed and bite any exposed areas such as the neck, arms, shoulders, and hands. They DO NOT live on the body like lice or fleas. Bed bug infestations can happen to anyone and they ARE NOT CAUSED BY POOR HOUSEKEEPING. They can survive for months in a vacant apartment, crawl to new rooms or apartments, or travel to new buildings on furniture and clothing packed by people moving.

## Can bed bugs harm my health?

Bedbugs are not known to transmit any diseases to humans. However, the bites can cause itching, swelling, inflammation, and may interfere with sleep. To reduce the risk of infection, do not scratch bites and wash the area with antibacterial soap.

## What can tenants do?

- ◆ Tell your landlord about the problem. You can also contact Boston Inspectional Services or the Boston Public Health Commission
- ◆ Your landlord must hire a licensed exterminator to treat the problem and give you written notice and instructions on what to do to get ready. You must follow all these instructions.
- ◆ Wash clothing, sheets, and blankets in hot water and dry them on high heat to kill bedbug eggs. Put clean laundry in sealed new plastic bags until after the exterminator treats the apartment.

## What can landlords do?

- ◆ Carefully choose a licensed exterminator that has a specific plan and experience treating for bedbugs. The exterminator will implement an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan, which describes the extent of the infestation and the steps to control and monitor it. The IPM plan should be shared with tenants.
- ◆ Inform your tenants about the date and time of the planned treatment and what it will involve. You must provide them with written instructions at least 48 hours in advance.
- ◆ Ensure that all your tenants follow the preparation instructions and have the exterminator inspect all units and treat the affected unit(s) and surrounding units (above, below, to either side, and across the hall).

## Prevent Bedbugs!

**There are several things that you can do to reduce the chances of a bedbug infestation:**

- ◆ Never pick up furniture or luggage left at the curb for trash collection and avoid buying second-hand furniture or luggage.
- ◆ Request a rental pre-inspection by the Boston Inspectional Services Department by calling 617-635-5322.
- ◆ Seal any cracks or holes in walls, ceilings, and floors.



**For more information, please call:**

**Boston Public Health Commission at 617-534-5966**

**Boston Inspectional Services at 617-635-5300**



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