



### Diseases Fact Sheet – Bed Bugs

#### South Dakota Department of Health

**Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)**

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

#### What is it?

Bed bugs are small, flat, brown insects less than ¼ inch long, about the size of an apple seed. Bed bugs feed on human blood which can cause itching and welts. Bed bugs are a re-emerging pest. The scientific name for bed bugs is *Cimex*.

Bed bugs are found in most parts of the world, including South Dakota. As the name indicates, they often live in beds. They can infest homes, hotels, dorms, or any place people gather. Bed bugs hide in cracks, seams, creases, and corners of mattresses, bed frames, chairs, sofas, walls, or furniture. The bugs prefer wood and fabric over metal or plastic. The bugs hide during the day and creep out at night to suck blood. The actual bug is rarely seen, but the reddish-brown dots and smears of excrement are visible.

#### Who gets bed bugs?

Anyone may be bitten by bed bugs if they sleep in an infested bed or sit in an infested chair.

#### How do bed bugs spread?

Bed bugs are hitchhikers and are spread by moving beds, furniture, luggage or clothing from one room or building to another. The bugs are small and their eggs are very tiny so they may not be seen when infested furniture or luggage is moved into a new home or building. Once introduced bed bugs may spread throughout the whole building.

#### Do bed bugs carry disease?

Bed bugs are annoying, but they are not known to carry diseases. Some people do not feel or react to the bite, and don't even know they have been bitten. Others are more sensitive developing welts and redness where bitten. Occasionally itching and scratching may cause secondary infections, which if severe may need medical treatment. The night-biting habits of the bed bug may disrupt sleep.

#### Controlling bed bugs

Bed bugs can be difficult to control. It is best to have a professional pest controller apply the insecticides to kill the bed bugs. A lay person can look for bed bugs or their droppings in the seams of mattresses, bed frame cracks, night tables, wall moldings, wall and floor cracks, wallpaper openings, etc. Specially trained dogs can sniff out bed bug infestations. Wash the bedding and clothes in very hot water and dry at full heat, clean the carpets, rugs, and curtains. Repair wall cracks. Get rid of clutter. The mattress should be scrubbed, including the seams. An infested mattress and box spring should be sealed in a waterproof, hypo-allergenic mattress cover for at least 12 months (same type of cover used to control dust mites, such as Allerzip™), or throw the mattress out. If you throw out an infested mattress, chair or couch, label it with the permanent marker “*Bed bug infested*”.

### Related Sites:

- Cornell University
  - [Bed Bug Fact Sheet](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Illinois Department of Public Health](#)
- [Nebraska Extension](#)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
  - [Bed Bug Information](#)
  - [EPA-Registered Bed Bug Products](#)