

# Bed Bugs

**Size:** about the size of an apple seed; 5-7 mm or 3/16-1/4 inch long

**Appearance:** long and flat oval-shaped body; if recently fed, balloon-like and more elongated body

**Color:** brown or reddish-brown

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Bed bugs are a national epidemic. These bugs, which we've all heard horror stories about, live on the blood of animals or humans. They can easily infest entire homes, businesses, or hospitals when just a single male and female bug are introduced to the area. Because the bed bug issue is not one that is going away anytime soon, it is important to be well informed about these insects, their habits, and what you can do if you suspect an infestation to prevent these bugs from becoming too unmanageable.

## What are Bed Bugs?

Bed bugs are small, reddish-brown parasitic insects that bite the exposed skin of sleeping humans and animals to feed on their blood. Bed bugs are small, flat, oval shaped insects that are roughly the size of an apple seed. Bed bugs are hatched from eggs, which are around the size of two grains of salt, that usually appear in clusters in tight, hard to reach cracks in your home or building, like in the seams of your mattress or the spines of books. Before the bugs become active, they shed their yellowish skin five times until they are mature, brown, and ready to feed.

Because bed bugs hide in tight spaces that are hard to find and typically not checked, they can produce over three generations of bugs in just one year when left uninterrupted.

## Bed Bug Bites

Because bedbugs feed on blood, they have elongated beaks for mouths, which allows them to draw blood from their host. About every week, the bugs will feed until they are engorged and then retreat into their tight crevices to mate and await their next feeding. Bed bugs do not transmit or spread disease, but they can cause some people to develop small red bumps or welts that are clustered together, usually in groups of three. Other people do not show any allergic reactions to bed bugs bites. Although bed bugs do not cause harm to people, bed bug infestations can lead to public health concerns, economic stress or embarrassment.

## Infection Causes

Bed bugs can be picked up almost anywhere – stores, hotels, gyms, clothes – by hitchhiking on different hosts. Because the bugs are so small, they are easily undetected when brought in on clothing, bedding, luggage, books, or used furniture. If you are concerned that you may have an infestation in your home, go through the following checklist:

## Do I have bed bugs?

Some characteristic signs of a bed bug infestation include:

- **Seeing the bugs** – Typically, bed bugs congregate together near the host, such as beds or couches.
- **Case skins** – As the juvenile bed bugs grow, they shed their skins, which can indicate an infestation.
- **Defecation** – After feeding, bed bugs defecate black to brown stains on porous surfaces or black to brown mounds on nonporous surfaces.
- **Bites** – Red welts on the skin can be indicative of bed bug activity. These bites will itch.

If you are experiencing any bites or suspect you may have an infestation, A.W.E.S.O.M.E. Pest Service can help you get your house back from these pesky bugs.

