

Bed Bugs

(*Cimex lectularius*)



Adult, about 5 mm (scale in mm)



Young nymph after feeding



Adults and eggs in a dresser crack

Identification – Adult bed bugs are flat, oval, wingless and reddish-brown, about the size of an apple seed (roughly 1/4 inch). After feeding, they swell up and turn darker red. Young nymphs are tiny and pale until they feed. The eggs are white, about the size of a pinhead, and laid in cracks. Other signs to look for are small dark spots (droppings) on sheets and mattress seams, and shed skins. Bed bugs don't jump or fly.

Why they're a problem – Bed bugs feed on human blood at night. They aren't known to spread disease, and they can't kill you; the harm is the bites and the stress of having them. But they spread easily, hide deep in furniture, and are hard to get rid of without a thorough professional treatment. Don't panic. Bed bugs are tough, but not invincible.

What we find – Bed bugs don't fly or crawl in from outdoors; they're brought in as hitchhikers. In thousands of bed bug jobs, there has always been a specific source, such as recent travel, out-of-town guests, used furniture or beds, or a cleaning crew or caregiver who works in other homes. We find them where people sleep and lounge, in bedrooms (including closets) and on couches and chairs, not in kitchens or bathrooms. **Bites alone aren't proof.** Many insects bite the same way, and lots of things cause itchy skin. Many "bed bugs" we're sent turn out to be carpet beetle larvae, psocids, small beetles or bat bugs, so we confirm before we treat.

What works – **We inspect first, then do a thorough treatment with follow-up.** A bed bug treatment is involved, so we confirm bed bugs are present first. Treatment depends on good preparation (we provide a checklist) and covers beds, furniture, baseboards and other hiding places, followed by re-inspections and spot treatments as needed. It's normal to see a few stray bugs for a couple of weeks afterward, because the materials keep working. Badly infested mattresses or couches sometimes have to go.

What you can do – Start by figuring out how you got them, because knowing the source is the best way not to get them again. **Don't use store-bought sprays or foggers.** They don't reach the bugs and can interfere with a professional treatment. Run bedding, clothes and towels through the dryer on high heat; the dryer kills them, but washing alone isn't enough. Vacuum mattress seams and around the bed, then empty or throw out the bag right away. Don't move furniture or sleep in another room, because that spreads them. When you travel, keep luggage off the floor and bed, check the headboard and mattress edges, and unpack straight into the dryer when you get home.

When to call Dynamic – Give us a call if you find a bug in or near a bed, or if you're waking up with bites and don't know why. Save the bug in a sealed bag or container. If you're not sure it's a bed bug, send us a photo and we'll identify it for you.