

## What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are tiny insects (only around 5mm fully grown) that feed exclusively on blood. They are flat, oval shaped insects that are reddish-brown in color. They are usually active at night when people are sleeping, and during the day they hide in tiny crevices in mattresses, box springs, bed frames, floors, furniture's and walls. Their feeding can last 3 to 12 minutes., and they will crawl up to 20 feet to feed. Although they do not carry diseases, bed bugs can cause a serious allergic reaction that may require medical attention. They can live several months without feeding on a host. Pictured below are the various growth stages of bed bugs.



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# Bed Bugs



- ◆ What are they?
- ◆ Do I have them?
- ◆ How to Treat Bed Bug Infestations
- ◆ Protection against them



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## How do I know if I have bed bugs?



A bed bug infestation can be recognized by blood stains from crushed bugs or by rusty (sometimes dark) spots of excrement on sheets and mattresses,

bed clothes, and walls. Fecal spots, eggshells, and shed skins may be found in the area of their hiding places. An sweet, syrupy, musty odor may be detected when the infestation is severe. Inspection efforts should concentrate on mattresses, box springs, bed frames, and all cracks and crevices that bed bugs could hide in. They can hide in many places including windows and door frames, floor cracks, carpet tack boards, baseboards, electrical boxes, furniture, pictures, wall hangings, curtains, loosed wallpaper, cracks in plaster, and ceiling moldings. The salivary fluid injected by bed bugs can causes the skin to become irritated and inflamed. The bite may cause an itchy welt or localized swelling that some



mistake for mosquito bites. Typically, the bed bug bites are in rows of three or more.

## How can I protect myself and my family from bed bugs?

The thing that makes bed bugs so challenging to detect and control is their excellent ability to squeeze into cracks and crevices, and will often go unnoticed. Be on the lookout for the signs and/or symptoms.

- ◆ If you travel, especially internationally, check the mattress and box springs in the motel room. You may see where they poop or you may actually see the bugs.
- ◆ They can infest airplanes, trains, and buses also. When you return home, inspect your luggage and clothing.
- ◆ Avoid picking up used furniture. If picked up, ensure that the furniture is thoroughly cleaned and inspected before bringing it home.
- ◆ Consider investing in a zippered mattress/box springs cover
- ◆ The biggest threat of catching bed bugs from a communal laundry room comes from shared equipment especially laundry cloth carts but can even happen with metal carts and folding tables.
- ◆ Reduce clutter in your house so bed bugs have less places to hide. (Keep in mind that bed bugs do not discriminate and are found in both sanitary and unsanitary conditions.



## How can I get rid of bed bugs?

There are multiple different things that one can do to rid their house of bed bugs.

- ◆ Bed bug eggs must be exposed to 118°F for 90 minutes to reach 100% mortality. Adult bed bugs will die within twenty minutes if exposed to 118°F. Heat treatments have been successful if properly done
- ◆ Frequently vacuum the infected mattresses and premises around the infected area and sanitize the area. After vacuuming immediately place the vacuum cleaner bag in a tightly sealed plastic bag and discard in a container outdoors
- ◆ Scrub the mattress seams with a stiff brush to remove any bed bugs or eggs from that area. After the mattress is rid off bed bug issues, enclose it in a zippered mattress cover
- ◆ If possible, consider investing in a new mattress entirely once the bed bugs have been discarded of
- ◆ Repair cracks in plaster and/or glue down loosened wallpaper to eliminate hiding places for bed bugs
- ◆ Insecticides can be used, but one must take the proper precautions because they can be harmful to humans and animals. Be sure to read the labels to ensure proper use. Also, bed bugs have been know to detect and avoid chemicals, so make sure you cover the entire area.

**\*\* If you have any more questions about the topic please feel free to call Cherokee Nation Office of Environmental Health. Contact information is on the back of the brochure.**