



Iowa Department of Public Health Division of Environmental Health

Bed Bugs

Overview: Bed bugs are small insects without wings. At one time they were almost eliminated from the United States. Currently they can be found in all 50 states including Iowa. Bed bugs are not known to spread disease. Bed bug bites usually will cause large itchy welts on the skin. These welts may not appear for 24 to 48 hours.

What are bed bugs?



A bed bug is a small insect without wings. Adult bed bugs look similar to a tick and have flat copper colored

bodies that are about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in length. Young bed bugs (nymphs) are nearly colorless and very small. Bed bugs mostly feed on the blood of humans.

Are there really bed bugs in Iowa?

Yes, there are bed bugs in Iowa. Although bed bugs were virtually eliminated from the United States in the 1950's, changes in the ease of international travel, and the bed bugs ability to hide in luggage, pillows and furniture have resulted in a huge increase in their numbers in the US. They can now be found in all 50 states.

Where are bed bugs found?



Bed bugs are found most often around areas where people sleep or rest. Adult bed bugs or evidence of their presence can be found

with the aid of a flashlight and careful inspection. Small bloodstains from crushed bed bugs or dark brown spots from bed bug droppings may be evident on mattresses. Because bed bug nymphs shed their skin several times, the "empty shells" may also be evident.

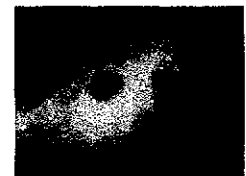
Why don't people see bed bugs?

Bed bugs are most active between midnight and 3 am. They are rarely active during daylight hours, and only come out when they sense the warmth and odors of a body at rest. Because of their small flat bodies, they can hide in the cracks and crevices of mattresses, bedding, furniture, and draperies, and are difficult to spot without the use of a flashlight and careful inspection.

Are bed bugs dangerous?

Bed bugs do not transmit disease.

However, bed bug bites can cause large itchy welts on the skin. A



person's reaction to insect bites is an immune response and can widely vary from person to person. The bites themselves are usually painless and rarely awaken a sleeping person.

How long do bed bugs live?

The typical life span of a bed bug is between 10 months to a year. In general, bed bugs seek a meal of blood every 4 or 5 days. However, they can survive for weeks to several months without eating.

For More information contact:

Iowa Department of Public Health at
(515) 281-7726