

BED BUGS

How to identify them, prepare for treatment and prevent them returning

Important

Bed bugs are not caused by poor hygiene. They can be carried into any clean home or business in luggage, clothing, bags and second-hand furniture.

How to identify bed bugs

Adult bed bugs are flat, oval, wingless insects, usually around 5–7 mm long. Unfed adults are brown; after feeding they become darker and more reddish. Young bed bugs are smaller and paler.

Look for evidence – not bites alone

- **Live bed bugs** in mattress seams, bed frames, headboards, nearby furniture, skirting gaps or behind loose fittings.
- **Dark brown or black spotting** on mattresses, frames, walls or bedding. This may be bed bug faecal spotting.
- **Pale cast skins** left behind as young bed bugs grow.
- **Tiny cream-white eggs** or empty eggshells, often hidden in cracks and joints.
- **Blood spots** on bedding can occur, but they are not proof on their own.

What about bites?

Bites may be itchy, red and grouped or in a line, but reactions vary greatly and some people show no visible reaction. Other insects and skin conditions can look similar, so bites alone cannot confirm bed bugs.

Need confirmation?

If possible, safely capture a specimen in a sealed clear container or take a sharp close-up photograph. Do not spray or crush all evidence before the inspection.

Before your treatment visit

Good preparation gives the technician access to harbourages and reduces the risk of spreading bed bugs. Follow any property-specific instructions we give you, as the exact preparation may vary with the treatment method.

Please do

- Continue sleeping in the usual bed unless your technician advises otherwise. Moving rooms can encourage bed bugs to spread.
- Remove bedding carefully and place it directly into strong bags. Seal the bags before moving them through the property.
- Wash suitable bedding, clothing and washable textiles at 60°C where the care label permits, or tumble-dry on a hot setting suitable for the item. Keep cleaned items sealed until advised.
- Reduce clutter around beds and upholstered furniture. Bag items before moving them and do not transfer them to another room.
- Vacuum visible bed bugs, seams, edges and cracks using a crevice tool. Immediately seal and dispose of the vacuum contents outside. Your technician may ask you to delay vacuuming certain areas before or after treatment.
- Empty bedside cabinets, drawers or wardrobes only if instructed, keeping contents bagged and within the affected room for assessment.
- Tell us about children, pregnancy, asthma, allergies, pets, fish tanks or anyone who may need extra precautions.
- Arrange access to all affected and adjoining sleeping areas. In flats, hotels or shared buildings, nearby rooms may also need inspection.

Please do not

- Do not move beds, mattresses, furniture, clothing or belongings into another room or property.
- Do not throw away beds or furniture unless your technician recommends it. Most items can be treated.
- Do not use smoke bombs, foggers, unapproved chemicals, agricultural products or mixed insecticides. These can be dangerous and may drive bed bugs deeper into the building.
- Do not place untreated items into communal corridors, vehicles, skips or charity collections.
- Do not dismantle furniture unless asked; this can scatter insects and make inspection harder.

If an item must be removed

Ask us first. It should be treated or securely wrapped before leaving the room, clearly marked as infested and made unsuitable for reuse where appropriate.

Your treatment programme

Bed bug control is a process, not simply a single spray. Your technician will select a treatment plan after inspecting the property, the extent of activity, room use, surfaces, occupants and any previous treatments.

Stage	What it means
Inspection and identification	We check beds, frames, furniture, cracks and likely spread routes. Monitoring devices may be recommended.
Targeted treatment	The plan may include professional-use residual insecticides, dusts, steam, heat, physical removal, mattress encasements or a combination of methods.
Monitoring and follow-up	A return inspection or further treatment is commonly required. Bed bug eggs and hidden insects may not all be affected on the first visit.
Confirmation	Control is judged by inspection, monitoring and the absence of fresh evidence over time – not simply by whether bites stop immediately.

On the day

- Be ready to leave treated rooms when instructed. Re-entry time depends on the products and methods used; follow the technician's written advice and product label.
- Keep children and pets away from wet treated surfaces. Cover or remove food, medicines, toiletries, toys and pet bowls as directed.
- Fish and reptiles can require special protection. Tell us in advance so suitable arrangements can be agreed.
- The technician may stop or modify treatment if preparation is incomplete or if a safety concern is identified.

After treatment

- Do not wash, mop or vacuum treated surfaces until the date your technician specifies. Cleaning too soon can remove the residual treatment.
- You may continue to see some activity for a period after treatment. Report persistent or increasing activity, but do not add other pesticides.
- Continue sleeping in the treated room unless told otherwise, and keep cleaned belongings sealed until your technician says they can be returned.
- Attend every agreed follow-up visit. Missing a follow-up can allow surviving insects to rebuild the infestation.

No instant guarantee

The time needed to achieve control depends on infestation level, access, cooperation, insecticide resistance and whether bed bugs are being reintroduced from another room, property or item.

Preventing bed bugs going forward

At home

- Keep the area around beds reasonably clear so signs can be found early.
- Inspect mattress seams, bed frames and headboards periodically, especially after travel or overnight guests.
- Consider approved bed bug mattress and divan encasements if recommended. Encasements must remain intact and fully zipped.
- Avoid bringing discarded mattresses or upholstered furniture indoors. Inspect second-hand items carefully before entry.
- In shared buildings, report suspected activity promptly to the landlord, housing provider or building manager so neighbouring areas can be assessed.

After travel

- Keep luggage off beds and upholstered furniture while away; use a luggage rack where possible.
- On returning, unpack in a well-lit area away from bedrooms if practical and inspect luggage seams and pockets.
- Bag travel clothing before carrying it through the home. Launder or heat-dry suitable items according to their care labels.
- Vacuum luggage carefully and dispose of the vacuum contents outside in a sealed bag. Store luggage away from sleeping areas where possible.

When to contact us

- You find a live or suspected bed bug, eggs, cast skins or fresh dark spotting.
- Activity is found in a new room or an adjoining property.
- You cannot complete part of the preparation safely.
- A resident is vulnerable, has mobility difficulties or needs a tailored treatment plan.
- Fresh evidence continues after the monitoring period or between planned visits.

Health advice

Bed bug bites usually settle without medical treatment. Avoid scratching and keep the skin clean. Ask a pharmacist, NHS 111 or your GP for advice if symptoms are severe, there are signs of infection, or you are concerned about an allergic reaction. Call 999 for a severe allergic reaction or breathing difficulty.

Your treatment record

Inspection / visit date	
Areas treated	
Follow-up due	
Technician notes	

This guide supports, but does not replace, the written instructions provided for your specific treatment.