

Bedbugs

Where do bedbugs live?

Bedbugs do not have nests but can live in a variety of places such as any of following (not an exhaustive list):

- In cracks and crevices around the headboard, mattress, bed frame and the skirting alongside the bed.
- Under wallpaper or cracks in the plaster, in furniture such as bedside tables, wardrobes and drawer units and behind shelves and pictures.
- In the hem of curtains.
- In and amongst clothes, books, files, toys, and other personal items.
- Soft furnishings such as sofas and chairs.

Signs to look for if you suspect you have a problem with bedbugs

- Bites. These are usually the first indication that there is a problem, and they may continue for some time before you realise that it's bedbugs that are biting you. When a bedbug bites you it pierces the skin with a very sharp tube. It then injects some of its saliva into the site, containing an anticoagulant and analgesic. This stops the blood clotting and stops us feeling the bite. It is these proteins that our immune system reacts to and causes the symptoms we recognise as a 'bite' such as itching, swelling and redness.

Bedbugs feed for much longer than other biting insects (fleas, midges, mosquitoes), and so need to inject more saliva. This is why their bites tend to be worse. However, as with other biting insects, some people will react more than others, while some will not react at all.

- Bedbugs have a small, reddish-brown oval shape (like a fat rugby ball) and have horizontal lines running across their backs. They vary in size, 1 - 5 mm long.
- Small, black (dark red) blood spots seen on the sheet, pillow case, and duvet.
- Small (1mm) white or pearl coloured eggs on backs of headboards, etc.
- Dead bedbugs or their casings (where they shed their 'skin').
- Small blood spots, almost black in colour, and any of the above signs may be seen on the following:
 - The mattress (especially around ribbing and buttons).

- The base of the bed (especially head end). Bedbugs will hide away in cracks and crevices so on a divan bed look underneath where the plastic is stapled to the frame, around the wheels and any fixings on the headboard. For wooden beds, check the joints and around any fixings.
- Headboards and inside bedroom furniture such as wardrobes and drawer units.
- Skirting boards, around cracks in walls and floors, under wallpaper and behind pictures.
- Curtains.

What to do before your property can be treated for bedbugs

- Remove the sheets, pillow, duvets, under sheets, etc. from the bed.
- Wash all bed linen (i.e. sheets, duvet covers and pillow cases) in as warm a wash as the label will allow. Ideally this should be at 60 degrees centigrade in order to kill the bedbugs and their eggs.
- If possible, a hot tumble dry for at least 45 minutes will also kill bedbugs and their eggs.
- If you suspect bedbugs are in the curtains, they will need to be washed or dry cleaned.
- Remove all items from underneath the bed as well as any items that are on the floor like shoes, children's toys and books, this includes any drawers in the base of the bed. Go through all items and check if bedbugs are living within them. Wash them at 60 degrees if you suspect that they are.
- If bedbugs are living in or on small items such as a child's toy, either steam clean it or seal it in a plastic bag and place in a freezer for three days. Freezing will usually kill bedbugs and their eggs.
- Take down any pictures and check for any signs of bedbugs.
- Clear out the bedside tables.
- Make sure that as much of the area as possible around the skirting board (the wall/floor junction) is clear and accessible.
- Thoroughly vacuum the mattress, base of the bed, headboard, skirting, area under and around beds, bedside tables and soft furnishings such as sofas and chairs. Afterwards, dispose of the vacuum bag (or empty the vacuum cleaner) and place the vacuum bag/waste in an outside bin.
- If you have a steam upholstery cleaner, steam clean the mattress, headboard, bed frame, skirting, soft furnishings such as sofas and chairs, and any personal items that won't be damaged by steam. Concentrate on areas such as cracks and crevices, folds in fabric, etc. Follow all safety instructions when using steamer.

- If you suspect bedbugs are living in wardrobes and drawer units or behind shelves, any items stored inside or on top of these will need to be removed to allow for treatment. Textiles in wardrobes and drawers will also need to be washed at 60 degrees.

What the treatment will not include:

- It is not permitted to spray insecticide onto things like clothing or bedding, children's toys, books and files.

After the pest control treatment

- **Do not vacuum or steam clean after the treatment as it will remove the insecticide.**
- Once the treatment has been completed you will need to stay out of the property for at least five hours. This includes keeping pets, especially cats (also fish, reptiles, and exotic pets) out of the property.
- As you will have to vacate the property for at least five hours, please ensure that you take any valuables, money, phones, clothing and medication with you for that period.
- Before sleeping on the beds that have been treated you must ensure that mattresses are dry and they have been covered with a sheet.
- Although the number of bedbugs should have decreased, it is not uncommon to notice a few remaining after the first treatment. We usually spray a property three times at intervals of around three weeks between each treatment.