

February 2011

# FACT SHEET

## Bed Bugs

### By Checko Miller

**Cimex lectularius is the most common type of cimicidae, or bed bug.** Experts do not know why bed bugs had disappeared for 40 years and then made a pervasive return starting in the late 1990's. With so many people coming and going from a school building, there is a high potential for the infestation and transmission of bedbugs. Infestations are very difficult and expensive to control. Therefore it is essential that a school has an adequate policy and procedures in place that include prevention education and professional methods to address bed bugs. Bed bugs have nothing to do with cleanliness or socioeconomic status, but there is still a stigma attached. A school needs to respond in a sensitive manner when this problem affects students and their families. A template for notification letters to households should be on file and ready to use if necessary. This Fact Sheet includes information on prevention and responses if bed bugs are found in classrooms or on students.

### What are bed bugs?



- Bed bugs are small, brownish, flattened insects.
- Nocturnal, usually hide during the day, feed on the blood of sleeping people.
- Bite does not hurt at the time, may develop an itchy welt similar to mosquito bite.
- Do not transmit disease, but can cause significant itchiness, anxiety, and sleeplessness.
- Do not live on a person, but can travel in backpacks, clothing, luggage, books, and other items.
- Can lay 500 eggs in a lifetime and can fast for a year between meals.

### Bed bugs found in the classroom

- School should contact a **licensed pest management professional** for assistance who must conform to the school's integrated pest management plan.
- Non-certified individuals should never apply pesticides on school grounds.
- Schools should not be closed due to bed bug presence.
- If pest management is necessary it will normally be targeted to certain areas of the school.



### Bed bugs found on a student



- May indicate the student has bed bugs at home OR brought to school by someone else.
- Student should be discreetly removed from the classroom.
- School nurse or a qualified individual can examine the student's clothing and other belongings.
- Bugs found should be removed and collected for identification.
- Keep the specimens as intact as possible.
- School principal or nurse should inform the student's parents or guardian (see Resources for link to sample letter).
- School principal, nurse, or program director should consider notifying the affected classes.
- Students should not be excluded from school due to bed bugs unless repeated efforts have been made to remedy an infestation.

### What can staff and students do?



- Staff can provide prevention/education and community resource information to students, and households.
- Backpacks, lunchboxes, and other items that travel back and forth to school can be inspected daily and sealed in plastic containers to prevent bed bugs from getting into them at home.

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- Hard surfaces can be cleaned with standard cleaning products.

## What if a student has an infestation at home?

- Staff need to be sensitive and tactful when dealing with the situation.
- Bed bugs have nothing to do with cleanliness or socioeconomic status, but there is still a stigma.
- Parents may be hesitant to admit to having bed bugs, and students may not want others to know.
- Students living in an infested home may also feel anxious or tired during the school day.
- Schools should work with the parents of any student living in an infested home to develop strategies for preventing the further spread of bed bugs.
- Determine if the infested home is being treated.
- Home remedies and do-it-yourself treatments are usually insufficient and could cause negative health effects or produce potential hazards in the home.
- Parents should store their child's freshly laundered clothing in sealed plastic bags until they are put on in the morning.
- Backpacks, lunchboxes, and other items that travel back and forth to school can also be inspected daily and stored in sealed plastic containers at home.
- At school, the student could be provided with plastic bags or bins in which to store their belongings.

## Where to get a specimen identified

- Contact your local county Health Department or Cornell Cooperative Extension (email: [nysipm@cornell.edu](mailto:nysipm@cornell.edu)) for assistance.

## Travel Tips

- Carry flashlight and magnifying glass to inspect the bed and furniture.
- Keep suitcases off the floor and bed; inspect them before you leave.
- If exposed, isolate luggage in plastic bag before returning home, then inspect any crevices, and wash and dry clothes on hot setting.
- Check web reports: [www.bedbugreports.com](http://www.bedbugreports.com), [www.bedbugregistry.com](http://www.bedbugregistry.com), or [www.cruisebruisse.com](http://www.cruisebruisse.com)

## Resources

[http://opt-osfns.org/dsf/forms/Bed\\_Bug\\_Kit.pdf](http://opt-osfns.org/dsf/forms/Bed_Bug_Kit.pdf)

Bilingual information, Protocol for NYC schools, and Sample Notification Letter to Parents

<http://www.ipmctoc.umn.edu/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Topics/bedbugs.htm>

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/vector/vector-faq1.shtml>

<http://newyorkvsbedbugs.org/bed-bugs-in-new-york-city/>

[http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/publications/bb\\_guidelines/](http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/publications/bb_guidelines/)

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/209.html>

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## Photo Gallery



Bed Bug Removing Blood



Bite Reaction



Photo AFPMB.org - Dr. Harold Harlan  
[www.SternEnvironmental.com](http://www.SternEnvironmental.com)

Evidence to Look For

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