

# BED BUGS

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Prevention  
and Treatment

Québec 

## What Bed Bugs Look Like

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Bed bugs are brownish insects that are visible to the naked eye and 4 to 7 mm long. They look like a flattened apple seed.



Adult size

Since bed bugs feed on the blood of sleeping humans, they live mainly in bedrooms. They are especially active at night and flee from light. During the day, they hide in dark, narrow, hard-to-reach places.



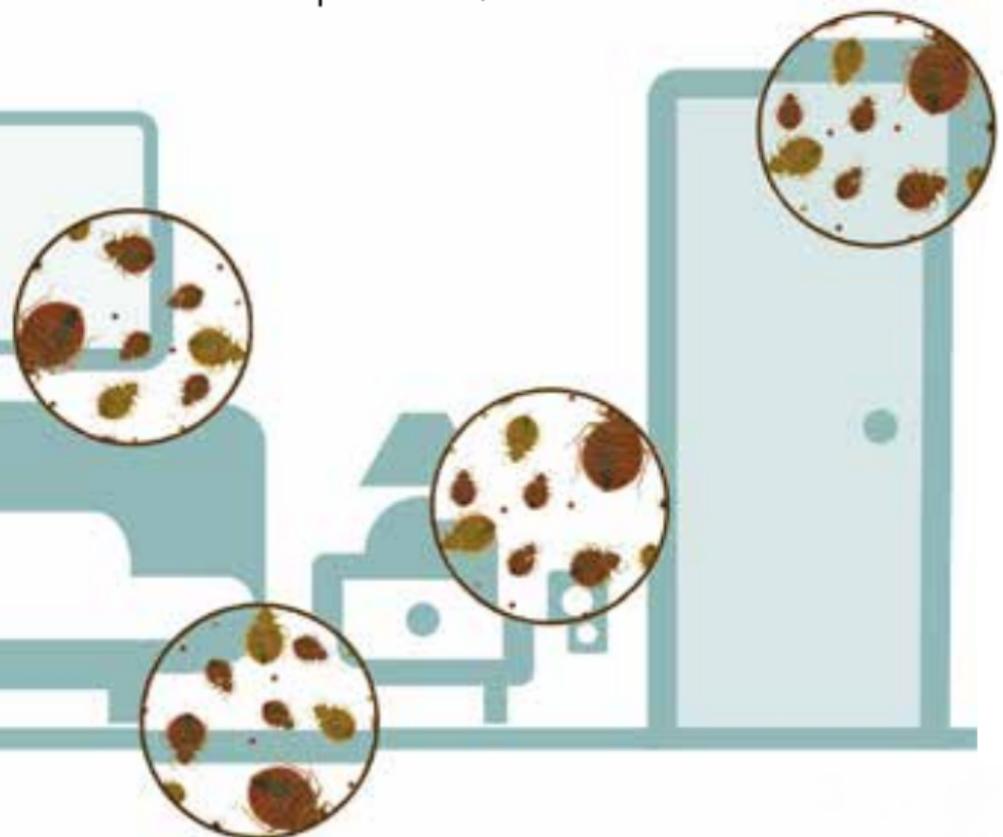
## Signs Bed Bugs Are Present

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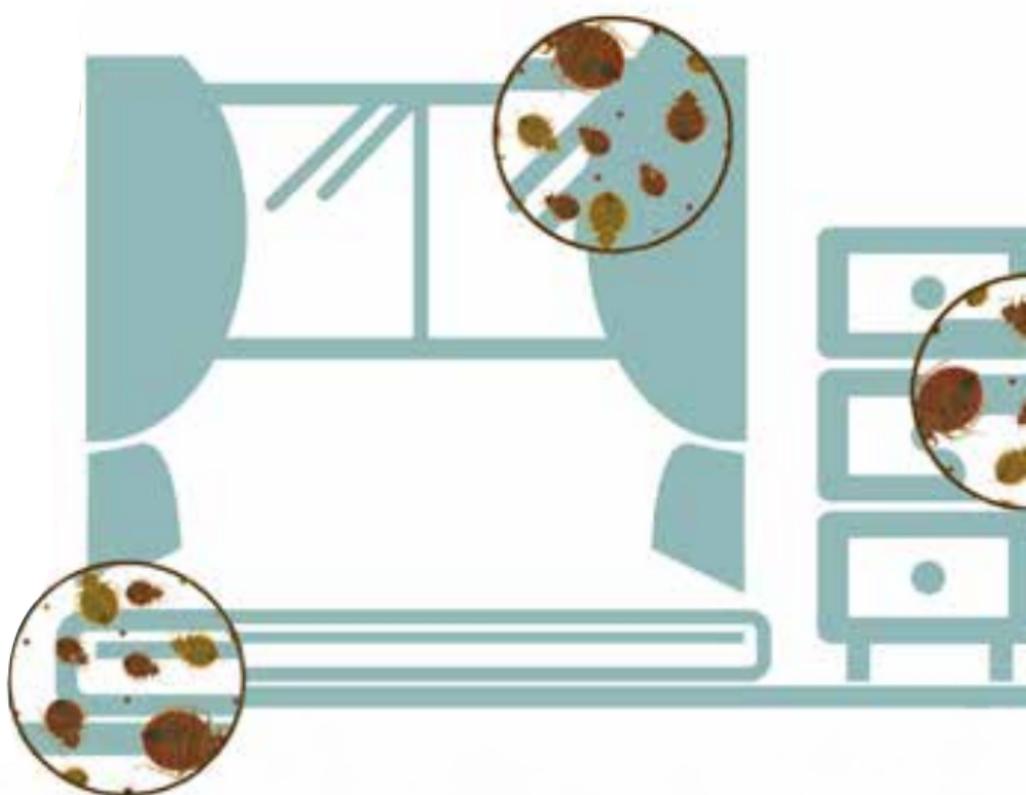
Most people notice they have bed bugs in their home because they wake up with itchy bites that resemble mosquito bites. The bites are often arranged in a straight line or clustered on parts of the body that are not covered during sleep. However, some people may have bed bugs in their home, but no bites.

Other signs visible in or around the bed indicate the presence of bed bugs:

- Little black spots (excrement)
- Dried blood stains (from bites)
- Cast bed bug skins
- Eggs (look like grains of white rice the size of a pinhead)



Bed bugs are hard to find because they can crawl into very narrow spaces, such as crevices as thin as a credit card. They can hide in cracks in floors, walls, and furniture, and behind heaters and electrical outlets, among other places. At the beginning of an infestation, bed bugs tend to hide near where they are feeding, i.e., near the person they will bite during sleep. As the infestation gets worse, the bed bugs may spread.



# How Bed Bugs Get Into Your Home

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Sometimes, you only need to make contact with an infested object once to bring bed bugs back home with you. The object may be clothing, a handbag or travel bag, a mattress, a sofa, a wheelchair, etc. Bed bugs spread quickly and often move from the bedroom to other rooms, and even to other apartments in the same building.

You are at risk of bringing bed bugs home with you in the following situations:

- You pick up furniture or objects left in the street that may be infested
- You purchase potentially infested items in flea markets, thrift shops, or used furniture outlets
- You move (either because there are bed bugs in the new home or because you have brought bed bugs with you by transporting infested items)
- You do your laundry in a common laundry room or laundromat where infested fabrics have been brought
- You come back from a trip with bed bugs hidden in your luggage, bags, clothing, sleeping bag, etc.

## How to Prevent Bed Bug Infestations

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- Don't pick up used mattresses or upholstered furniture (like sofas).
- If you pick up used pieces of non-upholstered furniture (dressers, bookshelves, etc.), it's best to steam clean them. If that's not possible, vacuum them thoroughly, making sure not to miss any cracks, and clean them with warm soapy water before bringing them into your home.
- If you acquire used clothing or fabric, empty the contents of your bags directly into the dryer, dry at high heat for at least 30 minutes, and immediately discard the bags in an outdoor garbage bin. Alternatively, empty the contents of your bags into the washer and choose a full cycle at the hottest setting, making sure the articles are completely covered by water. In this case, you must also discard the bags outside.
- If the used articles you acquire cannot be put in the dryer or washer, put them in the freezer at a temperature of at least  $-18\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $0.4\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) for a minimum of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days or steam clean them.
- Eliminate clutter in your home to help reduce the number of places bed bugs can hide.

## What to Do if Bed Bugs Are Present

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Above all, don't try to solve the problem **yourself**. Over-the-counter products hinder the work of exterminators and can be very harmful to your health if not used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

### If you are a tenant

You must **immediately** inform your landlord. He or she is responsible for having your apartment treated by a certified exterminator.

If your landlord does not take action, contact the Régie du logement in your region to find out what recourse you have.

### If you are a landlord or homeowner

You must promptly contact a certified exterminator to resolve the bed bug problem and prevent the bed bugs from spreading.

You must allow the exterminator to visit all rooms and apartments in the building you own.

## What to Do Before an Extermination Treatment

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Please follow all of the following instructions **prior to the exterminator's arrival.**

1. Before the exterminator arrives, make sure you remove any clutter on the furniture or floor to facilitate their work.
2. Put all items that can go in the dryer (clothing, bedspreads, curtains, mattress covers, sheets, etc.) at high heat for at least 30 minute or wash them in the washer, choosing a full cycle at the hottest setting and making sure the articles are completely covered by water. Remember to also treat clean clothes that are stored in dresser drawers, closets, wardrobes, etc. Anything that does not go in the dryer or washer can be put in the freezer at a temperature of at least  $-18\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $0.4\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) for a minimum of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days or steam cleaned.
3. Put your treated articles in a new garbage bag as soon as the drying, washing, freezing, or hot steam treatment is finished. Seal the bag and identify it as treated.

4. Check the condition of mattresses, box springs, and upholstered furniture.

If they are damaged, it may be more difficult to apply the treatment. Make them unusable by slashing them with a knife or scissors and enclose them in a large plastic bag so they are completely sealed, ensuring that nothing can get in or out. Then throw them away.

If they are not damaged, treat them on site with hot steam. After treatment, protect the mattresses and box springs with a bed bug-proof cover.

5. Vacuum the entire room, paying special attention to areas where you have seen bed bugs. Each time you finish using the vacuum, immediately toss the bag or vacuum contents in another bag. Seal the bag and dispose of it in an outdoor bin.

Make sure the exterminator returns at least once to check the effectiveness of the first treatment and to apply the number of treatments required to eliminate all bed bugs.

If you need to purchase new furniture, mattresses, or box springs, wait until the exterminator has finished all the treatments before getting them.

If the exterminator asks you to take other measures to maximize the effectiveness of treatment, please follow their instructions to the letter.

## What to Do on the Day of Treatment

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During an extermination treatment, all persons and pets must leave the residence. After the exterminator has finished the treatment, you must wait at least **6 hours** before returning home.

This period of time increases to **12 hours** for:

- People with respiratory problems
- People with allergies
- Children

This period of time increases to **24 hours** for:

- Babies 0 to 12 months of age
- Young children not yet walking
- Pregnant women

## What to Do After an Extermination Treatment

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- Respect the wait time recommended by the exterminator before returning to your home
- Ventilate treated rooms
- Avoid walking barefoot in treated areas for at least 48 hours after treatment
- Regularly check treated areas for signs of bed bugs

To eliminate bed bugs, **several extermination treatments** are often required. Generally, the exterminator allows 10 to 14 days between each treatment. You must wait for the exterminator to confirm that all bed bugs have been eliminated before putting back the fabrics and objects you have removed from the treated room.

For more information:

**Portail  
santé mieux-être**

**[www.sante.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.sante.gouv.qc.ca)**

***Santé  
et Services sociaux***

**Québec** 

