

## Who can I call for a list of licensed pest control professionals?

Pest control professionals are licensed by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. Call **401.222.2781** for additional information about licensed pest control professionals.

## Who is responsible for getting rid of a bed bug infestation?

The Rhode Island Housing Maintenance and Occupancy Code [RIGL 45-24.3] states that if the infestation is limited to a single dwelling unit, extermination is the responsibility of the occupant. However, if the infestation exists in two or more units, or in shared or public areas of a building with two or more units, then extermination is the responsibility of the building owner.

Contact the Minimum Housing Program of your city or town if your landlord or building owner has not addressed a bed bug infestation that involves a common area or two or more units.



Rhode Island Department of Health  
[www.health.ri.gov/topics/bedbugs.php](http://www.health.ri.gov/topics/bedbugs.php)

For more information on bed bugs  
call the HEALTH Information Line  
1.800.942.7434



## SOME FACTS ABOUT Bed Bugs

### Inside there are answers to:

- What are they?
- Why are they making a come back?
- How can I spot them?
- How do I treat them?

## What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are insects that feed on blood and can survive months without feeding. Their bites are often itchy, and sometimes painful. Bed bugs vary in size, and in color, from a red-brown to a light brown. Adult bed bugs are 1/4 inch, or about the width of a pencil.

Bed bugs move quickly. The females lay eggs in cracks and other hidden areas. The eggs appear tiny, white, and are hard to see without a magnifying glass.

Bed bugs are active at night and hide within 5 to 20 feet of where people sleep. They tend to gather in tiny crevices and other places, especially in mattresses, box springs, and head-boards.

## Why are bed bugs making a comeback?

Bed bugs are a growing problem everywhere. By spraying for insects less often, and using less dangerous chemicals when we do spray, our homes are safer for our families but also less toxic for bed bugs.

Bed bugs are hitchhikers. They travel by hiding in luggage, clothing, beds or furniture. This can make bed bugs a special problem for hotels, apartments, and when using second-hand furniture. Once bed bugs are introduced, they spread from room to room throughout a building. Keeping a clean home can limit cockroach and rodent problems, but will have little effect on bed bugs.



## What health effects are caused by exposure to bed bugs?

People sensitive to bites can have a raised, red swelling at each bite site or may develop a sensitivity that can include nervousness, and sleeplessness. Symptoms may also appear several days after being bitten.

Antihistamines (such as Benadryl) and corticosteroids (such as Cortaid ) may be prescribed to reduce allergic reactions, and antiseptic or antibiotic ointments (such as Neosporin) to prevent infection.

Bed bugs' feces, casings, and other materials can be asthma triggers in some people.

Although bed bugs feed on blood, there is no evidence that bed bugs transmit blood-borne diseases from one person to another.

## How can I spot a bed bug infestation?

Seeing two or more of these signs indicates that there is a bed bug problem in that room:

- Raised red bites on one or more family members
- Live bed bugs
- Small red pellets or rusty spots on sheets
- Tiny eggs in cracks or crevices near the bed
- Skin or casings shed by bed bugs
- Musty smell

## How can I control a bed bug infestation?

It is best to hire a professional pest control firm. They will carefully inspect all places where bed bugs may hide and use an approved insect spray in cracks and other hiding places.

Do not use any insecticide on a mattress unless the label specifically discusses application to a mattress. Most household sprays are not suitable for application to mattresses.

Any infected items like mattresses or upholstered furniture must be thrown out or treated. Treatments must be very thorough or bed bugs will soon be back.

### Treatments include:

- Heat and/or cold treatments, for the whole house or a single room
- Steaming or using special vacuums on mattresses, beds and other surfaces
- Closing off electrical boxes and other hiding places with a silicone-based sealant

### Make sure bed bugs don't come back by:

- Using plastic covers on mattresses and pillows
- Washing clothing, sheets, towels, etc. in hot water and detergent