



# City of Westminster

## Pest Information

**FREE PHONE:  
0800 3580514**

### Bed bugs

#### What they look like



The most common bed bugs are the *Common Bed bug*, found in dwellings (Martin bugs, which normally lives in birds' nests but can bite people). Common bed bugs are oval wingless insects, approximately 5mm long, with six legs and two antennae. They are red-brown in colour and flat in shape. Their colour turns to red/purple after a blood meal and they become more rounded in shape.

#### Where do they live?

Bed bugs hide themselves in mattresses, within bed frames, under bed bases, within bed headboards, behind loose wallpaper, within paintings, wall sockets, and telephones. Also behind wall partitioning, suspended ceilings, skirting boards, on clothing or furnishings, and anywhere with a dark crack/crevice/seam providing harborage. They like to stay close together. With frequent feeding, adults can live for up to 18 months. They breed by laying eggs that usually hatch after about 10 to 20 days. The bugs then grow through a series of stages. At each stage they need to feed on blood, until they become adults after about nine to 18 weeks. A female can lay between 150 and 345 eggs in her life.

The presence of bedbugs in a room can be detected by the following:

- blood spotting on bedding
- in heavy infestations, a sweet almond smell is common
- brown excrement spots close to where they live and on bedding
- whitish/opaque un-hatched and hatched eggs
- bed bugs are not normally seen during the day

Bed bugs will not travel too far from their host, but can move into adjacent rooms via interconnecting ducting/spaces. They are most likely to be transferred from place to place via infested linen, clothing, furniture and other articles. In hotels and hostels, housekeeping staff can unknowingly transfer bed bugs around the premises on all of the items mentioned above and guests can take bed bugs with them from hotel to hotel and eventually to their own home.

#### **Are they a health hazard?**

Bed bugs are not known to carry disease. However, they feed on human blood, usually at night whilst people are asleep in their beds. They inject a fluid into their host to help get their blood meal. These bites cause irritation and itching. Some people are particularly sensitive to the bites and experience an allergy and inflammation, especially to the arms and shoulders. This can be quite severe and require medical attention.

#### **How can I protect my dwelling?**

Bedbugs cannot jump or fly, and can only crawl, or be transported by furniture or clothing, so if you can, try to avoid taking in second hand furniture or clothing. Regular cleaning and vacuuming of your flat can also help reduce the risk of infestation. Washing clothes and bed linen at 60° or tumble drying on a “hot setting” for 30 minutes or Dry Cleaning can also remove bugs from infested items. **The best protection you can get is to report any concerns you have early.**

#### **How can I get rid of Bedbugs?**

Call City of Westminster Council Pest Control Team **Free Phone 0800 3580514.**

#### **Treatment**

The officer will explain the procedure for the application of the treatment and answer any queries you may have. Typically, these may consist of the applications of insecticide wet sprays, powder or Ultra Low Volume (mist or ‘fogging’ pesticides). In addition the officer will give you advice on what you can do to self help. You should avoid vacuum cleaning the treated area for approximately a week.

#### **Health & Safety**

If treatments are to be carried out you will be issued with a ‘Notice to Occupier’ form detailing important and Health & Safety information. You are required to sign for these forms. All pesticides used by us have been passed by DEFRA. It is the policy of this unit to use the safest and least toxic chemicals that have the minimal impact on the environment. Whilst providing the most effective and efficient treatment of infestations. You may remain present during the application of ‘gels’ and bait stations. However, **In the case of spray applications it is preferable that you vacate the premises for approximately 20 minutes. Or, In the case of Ultra Low Volume (ULV) applications you must vacate the premises for approximately 2 – 4 hours**

All efforts are made to place pesticides in the safest locations, the type of pest and layout of dwellings often dictate the actual positions of pesticides. It is **your** responsibility to ensure children and pets are kept well away from pesticides. **(Fish tanks are to be covered during treatment).**

#### **Post Treatment**

Most Bedbug treatment applications work by attacking the nervous system or ‘skin’ of the Bedbug and provide a residual active effect for at least six to twelve weeks. The increase in activity may occur for a short period after each treatment and sporadically occur thereafter as the eggs hatch and also due to the ‘flushing’ effect of the pesticide. This is why residual treatments are used to cover this period. Depending on the circumstances most Bedbug infestations take between three to six weeks to control (although some infestations can take up to 12 weeks).

**Failing to report a bedbug infestation is not wise** Bed bugs do not disappear of their own accord. If you believe you have a bedbug infestation in your property, please contact City of Westminster Council Pest Control Team to arrange an appointment for our officer to call. Failing to report a bed bug infestation may allow the infestation to spread to adjoining properties.

