



Bed Bugs – Facts & Tips

“Good night, sleep tight; don’t let the bed bugs bite.” Many people are familiar with this rhyme and know some basics about bed bugs. But, if you have never had to deal with them, you may not know how much of a public health nuisance they can be.

“Bed bugs are not known to spread diseases, but a bed bug bite can cause an itchy skin reaction,” explains Anne Wendt, manager of infection prevention at Bronson Healthcare. Reactions to bites will be different based on each individual and can range from just a mark to an allergic reaction. “In some cases, excessive scratching can lead to a skin infection,” says Wendt.

Bed bugs are small, brownish insects that feed on the blood of people and animals while they sleep.¹ A special ingredient in their saliva keeps blood from clotting while they feed.² The bugs have a slim flat body that allows them to fit into small places and stay for a long time. They do not have wings or jump.

How do you know if you have bed bugs? Bed bugs can be challenging to control because they are skilled at hiding. In some cases, people will wake up with itchy red bites. Bed bugs tend to like the dark and feed during nighttime. Other things to look for include live or dead bugs, blood staining or shed skin.

Bed bugs can be easily transported from place to place as adults and children move in and out of homes and in schools. They can infest homes, schools, apartments and workplaces all over the country. In 2016, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo and Battle Creek were listed on Orkin’s Top 50 Bed Bug Cities List.³

It’s important to prevent bed bugs from coming into your home by:

- Limiting the number of items being taken to school and brought home
- Checking your child’s backpack and clothing before entering your home
- Storing backpacks in clear, plastic bags or containers

If bed bugs are found in your child’s school, have them remove any clothing immediately when they come home. Place clothing in a dryer for 20 minutes at medium-high heat to kill off the bugs.

There are many resources available to help parents understand the facts about bed bugs. For more information about preventing bed bugs, as well as common myths and facts, visit michigan.gov/emergingdiseases

This article is brought to you by Bronson Children’s Hospital, southwest Michigan’s only children’s hospital. For more information about children’s health, visit bronsonhealth.com/services/children.

¹Michigan Emerging Disease Issues: http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,4579,7-186-76711_78161---.00.html

²Bedbugs Kid’s Health: <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/bedbugs.html>

³Orkin Top 50 Bed Bug Cities List 2016: <https://www.orkin.com/press-room/orkins-top-50-bed-bug-cities-list-chicago-tops-list-fourth-year-row/>

Bed bugs can commonly be found near where people sleep. Check the following areas if you think you may have bed bugs:

- Bed and furniture nearby
- Walls and trim
- Windows and window coverings
- Doors
- Electrical system
- Rugs or floor coverings
- Upholstered furniture