

# Bed Bugs

Bedbugs or bed bugs are small parasitic insects of the family Cimicidae (most commonly *Cimex lectularius*). The term usually refers to species that prefer to feed on human blood. All insects in this family live by feeding exclusively on the blood of warm-blooded animals. The name 'bedbug' is derived from the insect's preferred habitat of houses and especially beds or other areas where people sleep. Bedbugs, though not strictly nocturnal, are mainly active at night and are capable of feeding unnoticed on their hosts.

A number of health effects may occur due to bed bugs including skin rashes, psychological effects and allergic symptoms. Diagnosis involves both finding bed bugs and the occurrence of compatible symptoms. Treatment is otherwise symptomatic.

Bedbugs have been known by a variety of names including wall louse, mahogany flat, crimson Rambler, heavy dragoon, chynche, and redcoat. Largely eradicated as pests in the developed world in the early 1940s, bedbugs have seen a resurgence since about 1995.

**Appearance**Adult bedbugs are reddish-brown, flattened, oval, and wingless. Bedbugs have microscopic hairs that give them a banded appearance. Adults grow to 4&ndash;5 mm in length and 1.5&ndash;3 mm wide. Newly hatched nymphs are translucent, lighter in color and become browner as they moult and reach maturity.

## Feeding Habits

Bedbugs are obligatory hematophagous (bloodsucking) insects. Most species feed on humans only when other prey are unavailable. Bedbugs are attracted to their hosts primarily by carbon dioxide, secondarily by warmth, and also by certain chemicals.

A bedbug pierces the skin of its host with two hollow feeding tubes. With one tube it injects its saliva, which contains anticoagulants and anesthetics, while with the other it withdraws the blood of its host. After feeding for about five minutes, the bug returns to its hiding place.

Although bedbugs can live for a year without feeding, they normally try to feed every five to ten days. In cold weather, bedbugs can live for about a year; at temperatures more conducive to activity and feeding, about 5 months.