

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE

# Bed Bug Guide

for Licensed  
Child Care Facilities



## Quick Facts

### What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are brown, flat, oval-shaped insects without wings. They are about the size of an apple seed and they feed on blood. Though bed bugs prefer human blood, they also bite other mammals and birds. After feeding, bed bugs swell up and turn dark red. Being nocturnal insects, they normally bite people at night while they are sleeping. Bed bugs do not normally stay on people. After feeding, they usually return to their hiding places (ex: on or around mattresses, box springs and couches).

### What do bed bug bites look like?

Bed bug bites look like red bumps or rashes on the skin. They are usually found around the face, neck, upper body, arms and hands. Bed bug bites do not normally have a red spot in the centre. The bites may appear as unexplained bite marks, as people often do not remember being bitten.

### How do bed bugs affect my health?

There is no evidence that bed bugs spread disease; however, people can have allergic reactions to bed bug bites. Repeated scratching at bite marks or scabs may cause secondary skin infections. Health Canada considers bed bugs a “nuisance pest.” Under *The Public Health Act*, bed bugs do not have to be reported.

### What are other effects of bed bugs?

There can be a social stigma connected with having bed bugs. As a result, people who have severe or repeated infestations may feel anxious, worried or ashamed. Some people may have problems with their sleep, mental health, social or family life and finances, and may feel ridiculed or singled out by others.

### Where are bed bugs found?

Bed bugs are usually found in areas where people sleep, or sit, for long periods of time. Bed bugs prefer an environment where they can hide during the day and feed on a sleeping person at night. Although they prefer dimly lit or dark rooms, bed bugs may come into lighted areas to feed. Bed bugs prefer fabric, wood and paper surfaces. They are often found in folds or seams of mattresses and box springs, in or behind headboards and bed frames, behind baseboards, under area rugs, along edges of carpeting and under, or in folds of, chairs and couches.



### How do I know if bed bugs are present?

Signs that there might be bed bugs in your child care centre or home include:

- unexplained bite marks or welts on children, or others, at the facility
- spots (dried blood or bed bug fecal matter) on bedding, mattresses or box springs
- cast-off bed bug skins
- actual live or dead bed bugs
- a musty or sweet odour (usually with very large bed bug infestations)

Having bed bugs does not mean that the home, school, child care facility or public place is poorly kept. Bed bugs can travel on clothing, blankets, lunchboxes, stuffed toys, or other items that are moved from one place to another (ex: between a child's home and the facility). Items that most often have bed bugs are mattresses, box springs, couches and upholstered chairs. However, bed bugs can also be found on a variety of other items, including electronics, books and picture frames.

If bed bugs are not properly treated at the source, there is a risk of carrying the pests into child care facilities, other homes or public places. Early detection and treatment are the best ways to contain the spread of bed bugs.

## Policies for Child Care Facilities

Child care facilities must:

1. take precautions to prevent bed bug infestations
2. make staff aware of how to identify bed bugs and the signs of infestation
3. have an effective response plan in the event that bed bugs are discovered in the facility

A child should not be excluded from the facility when that child has a suspected or confirmed case of bed bugs. Child care centres and homes should not close as a result of finding bed bugs, unless short-term closure is necessary for a bed bug treatment handled by a pest control company.

## Procedures for Child Care Facilities

### 1. Preventing bed bugs from entering the child care facility

Bed bugs will most likely enter a facility on the clothing or belongings of children or staff who come from homes with bed bugs. To prevent bed bugs from entering the child care facility:

- ❑ **Check blankets, backpacks and clothing daily** for signs of bed bugs as the children enter and leave the facility.
- ❑ **Encourage families not to send blankets or stuffed animals** with their children, if possible.
- ❑ **Carefully inspect all second-hand or donated items** for signs of bed bugs before they are brought into the facility (ex: books, stuffed animals, furniture). Where possible, smaller items can be immediately run through the dryer for 20 minutes to kill any suspected bed bugs.
- ❑ **Keep individual children's belongings separate** by storing children's coats, clothing or other personal items in individual lockers or cubby holes. (See Manitoba Child Care Regulation 62/86, Sections 12(2), 14(2) and 29(2).) Use sealed plastic bags or containers for extra clothing, bedding or other cloth items.
- ❑ **Put clean cloth items in a dryer, or wash dirty cloth items in hot water, then dry in a dryer.** Running a normal dryer load for 20 minutes on high heat should kill all stages of bed bugs.
- ❑ **Vacuum daily.** It is important to pay close attention to places bed bugs like to hide, such as along baseboards. Dispose of vacuum bags/waste in an outside garbage container immediately after vacuuming.

### 2. Ensuring all staff are able to identify bed bugs and the signs of infestation

#### *In centres:*

Directors are responsible for ensuring that all centre staff, including cleaning staff, are educated to identify bed bugs and signs of infestation, both in the child care facility and on children's items. Directors should share the information in this guide with all employees, emphasizing the identification of the key signs of infestation: the discovery of actual insects, cast-off skins, droppings or excessive insect bites on a child.

#### *In homes:*

Home providers are responsible for their own awareness of bed bug policies and procedures, as well as ensuring that other workers in the home (substitutes, Inclusion Support Workers, etc.) are also provided with the information in this guide. Providers should emphasize the identification of the key signs of infestation: the discovery of actual insects, cast-off skins, droppings or excessive insect bites on a child.



### 3. Having an Effective Response Plan

All programs are required to have an effective response plan in the event that bed bugs are found in the child care facility. This response plan can be tailored to the needs of your facility. However, your response plan cannot contradict any of the policies in this guide, including the policy that **affected children must NOT be excluded** from the program. Your response plan should also include the procedures outlined below.



#### *If a child is suspected of having bed bug bites:*

- Immediately contact the child's parents/guardians to let them know you suspect the child has bed bug bites, and provide the family with educational materials. (See the list of online resources at the end of this document.)
- Search the child care facility for any other signs of bed bugs.

#### *If a suspected bed bug is found on a child or in the child care facility:*

- If the bed bug was found on a child or child's belongings, discreetly move the child from the main area so you can examine the child's clothing and other belongings.
- Put any bugs you find in a sealed container for identification.
- Contact a pest control company or public health inspector for help identifying the bugs. You need to make sure the bugs you found are in fact bed bugs.
- Examine everyone's belongings to help you determine who might have brought the bed bugs to the facility.
- Ask parents to limit the belongings children bring into the facility, including blankets, stuffed animals and backpacks. If you do this, you need to explain that bed bugs are suspected at the facility, but not yet confirmed.

#### *If bed bugs are confirmed at the child care facility:*

If you find more than one form of evidence of bed bugs at your facility (ex: actual bed bugs, cast-off bed bug skins, droppings, dried blood spots), you must seek treatment for a possible bed bug infestation. As bed bugs reproduce very quickly, confirmation of a single bed bug means that your facility has an infestation.

- Thoroughly examine your facility for additional evidence of bed bugs and report your findings to the public health inspector to determine if treatment is required. You can call the provincial Bed Bug Hotline at 1-855-3MB-BUGS (1-855-362-2847) to be connected with a public health inspector.
- Contact a licensed, professional exterminator for treatment.** A licensed exterminator can provide treatment and will know about the different products and techniques available to get the best results. Many exterminators are now using heat treatment to kill bed bugs instead of, or with, chemical treatment. **Licensed facilities must use professional exterminators.**



- ❑ Follow the pest control company's advice and recommendations exactly and completely.
- ❑ Inform parents/guardians of children attending the facility, as well as staff (if applicable), that bed bugs have been confirmed. You must maintain confidentiality. **You cannot share the names of any children, families or staff who may have brought bed bugs into the facility.**
- ❑ **Notify your child care co-ordinator** and public health inspector to advise them that an infestation has been confirmed and that treatment is being carried out.
- ❑ If applicable, work with your landlord to determine who is responsible for treating the bed bug infestation. Responsibility may depend on your contract.
- ❑ Provide educational materials to all families and staff (if applicable). (See the list of online resources at the end of this document.)
- ❑ Continue to limit belongings that are brought from children's homes into the facility, including blankets, stuffed animals and backpacks.
- ❑ If using mattresses for infant or overnight care, consider sealing the mattresses with bed-bug-proof mattress covers.
- ❑ After treatment has been carried out, you must **continue to monitor your facility** for signs of bed bugs to ensure the treatment has been effective and to prevent a reoccurrence of an infestation.

*If a specific child is suspected of introducing bed bugs to the facility:*

**Remember that bed bugs that enter the facility on a specific child may not have come from that child's home.** Bed bugs can be picked up in many places (ex: buses, taxis) and you should be sensitive when talking to parents/guardians.

- ❑ Ask all parents/guardians to store their children's freshly washed clothes in sealed plastic bags until the children put them on in the morning.
- ❑ Ask all parents/guardians to store items that go back and forth to the facility (ex: clothes, backpacks, lunchboxes) in sealed plastic containers at home to keep bed bugs from getting into them.

- ❑ Ask parents/guardians of the affected child to send a spare set of clean clothing sealed in a plastic bag for the child to wear at the facility. The child can change into the clean clothes and you can place the child's travel clothes into the sealed bag.
- ❑ Store the affected child's belongings in sealed plastic bags or bins to stop the spread of bed bugs to the other children's belongings.
- ❑ If you believe a family may be having trouble dealing with bed bugs in their home (ex: if a child continues to show signs of bed bug bites or brings bed bugs into the facility), consider suggesting other resources and services to help the family. This might include referring the family to a public health nurse. You can also refer them to a public health inspector or landlord/tenant services if the family lives in rental housing.

## What Funding is Available to Treat or Prevent Bed Bugs?

If you own your facility, you will be responsible for dealing with the bed bug infestation, including any costs related to treatment and prevention. If you can't pay for the cost of treatment tell your child care co-ordinator. Your co-ordinator may be able to help you explore funding options.

The Manitoba government has introduced a Bed Bug Grant Program, which assists **non-profit community programs** with the treatment and prevention of bed bugs. The purpose of the grant is to provide community-based, non-profit organizations with financial assistance to help with bed bug education, treatment/management and prevention. Qualified organizations can apply for costs related to bed bug treatment and prevention, up to a maximum of \$2,000.

Also introduced was the Bed Bug Prevention Materials Program which makes available bed bug prevention materials at a reduced cost to qualifying organizations. Materials available through this program include bed-bug-proof mattress and box-spring covers, insect monitors and record keepers, insect interceptor traps, dissolvable laundry bags, bed bug warning stickers, educational handouts and clear-view bed bug monitors.

## For further information contact:

### Province of Manitoba Bed Bug Hotline

**Phone:** 1-855-3MB-BUGS  
(1-855-362-2847)  
7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday

**E-mail:** [bedbugs@gov.mb.ca](mailto:bedbugs@gov.mb.ca)

**Website:** [www.manitoba.ca/bedbugs](http://www.manitoba.ca/bedbugs)

**Or:**

**Your child care co-ordinator.**

## Online Resources

Government of Manitoba:  
[www.manitoba.ca/bedbugs](http://www.manitoba.ca/bedbugs)

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority:  
[www.wrha.mb.ca/healthinfo/a-z/files/BedBugs.pdf](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/healthinfo/a-z/files/BedBugs.pdf)

City of Winnipeg:  
[www.winnipeg.ca/cms/bugline/insect\\_information/bedbugs.stm](http://www.winnipeg.ca/cms/bugline/insect_information/bedbugs.stm)

Government of Ontario:  
[www.bedbugsinfo.ca](http://www.bedbugsinfo.ca)

Michigan Manual for the Prevention and Control of Bed Bugs:  
[www.michigan.gov/documents/emergingdiseases/Bed\\_Bug\\_Manual\\_v1\\_full\\_reduce\\_326605\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/emergingdiseases/Bed_Bug_Manual_v1_full_reduce_326605_7.pdf)

Available in alternate formats upon request.