



PORT PHILLIP  
COMMUNITY GROUP  
HOME FREE PROJECT



CITY OF  
PORT PHILLIP

# BED BUGS

What are they?

Are they in your home?

How can you get rid  
of them?

A guide for tenants of public and transitional housing



CITY OF  
PORT PHILLIP

**HOME FREE is funded by the City of Port Phillip**

# CONTENTS

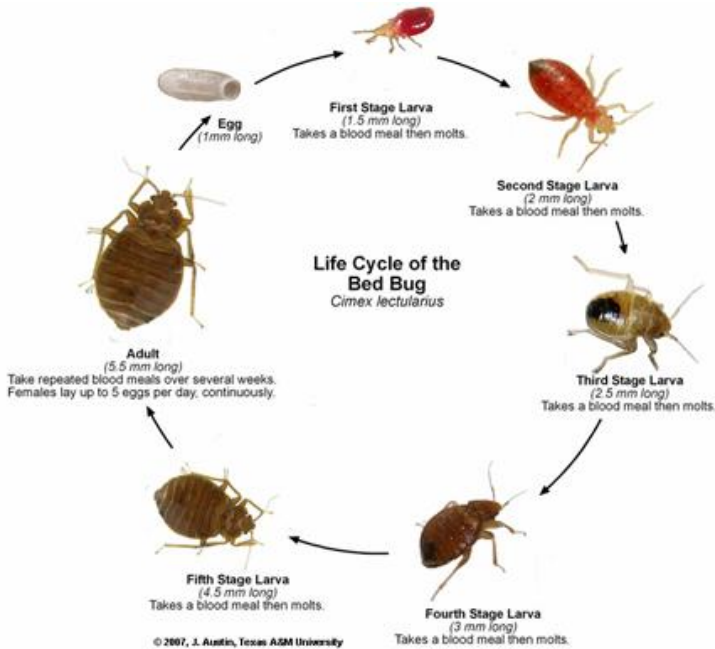
<b>What are bed bugs?</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Are there bed bugs in my home?</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>How do I get rid of bed bugs?</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>How do I keep my home free of bed bugs?</b>	<b>Page 11</b>
<b>Helpful contacts</b>	<b>Page 13</b>
<b>Checklist to get ready for insecticide treatment</b>	<b>Page 16</b>

# WHAT ARE BED BUGS?

## What do bed bugs look like?

Bed bugs are small insects but are big enough to see. They have flat, oval shaped bodies and do not have wings.

The eggs are cream in colour, and the adult bugs are light-brown before feeding and reddish-brown after feeding.



Bed bugs range in size from 1mm to 5mm, about the size of a poppy seed to the size of an apple seed.



*Real size of bed bugs (1mm to 5mm)*

## What are the habits of bed bugs?

Bed bugs cannot fly or jump but they are fast runners.

Bed bugs feed on the blood of humans, most commonly at night.

Bed bugs do not like light and hide in very small spaces.



## How do bed bugs spread?

Bed bugs can spread from one home to another on luggage, bags, furniture and even on clothing and shoes.



In built up housing situations such as apartment blocks, bed bugs can spread through the walls along electrical wires, through ducted heating and cooling, and through the plumbing.



## Are bed bugs dangerous?

Bed bugs **do not spread diseases to humans** and they cannot kill you.

Bed bug bites can be highly irritating and some people may suffer from an allergic reaction to bed bug bites. If bed bug bites are scratched, they can become infected.

# ARE THERE BED BUGS IN MY HOME?

## 1. You have bed bugs if you discover bites with the following characteristics:

- You were bitten at night
- You were bitten in neat rows, mainly on your shoulders and arms
- The bites appeared as large raised red patches which reduced to red marks and then faded over a few days
- Bites are swollen or itch severely



*Examples of bed bug bites*

## 2. You have bed bugs if you discover the bugs themselves in your home

Check in the common hiding places listed on the next page, and use the section '*What do bed bugs look like?*' on **page 3** to identify whether the insects are bed bugs:



*Bed bugs in a screw hole, the carpet, and the piping around a mattress*

...Are there bed bugs in my home?

### 3. You probably have bed bugs if you discover small bloodstains on your bedding, mattress or walls



*Bed bugs and bloodstains on a bed*

#### **Common hiding spots for bed bugs:**

- Mattresses and bed bases: in seams, folds around zips, under buttons, and along the piping
- Bedding: in sheets, blankets and quilts
- Soft furniture: (e.g. couches) in cushions, seams, folds around zips, under chair legs
- Hard furniture: (e.g. bedside table, bed frame and headboard) bed bugs prefer to live in wood or wicker, but can also live in metal and plastic. They often hide in screw and nail holes, joints, and cracks and crevices
- Around the room: in the skirting board, under rugs or the edges of the carpet, in door frames, hinges and the latch hole
- Your stuff: if there are a lot of bed bugs, they may also be hiding in your stuff including in phones, clocks, lamps, computers, books, newspapers, smoke detectors, and wall hangings

# HOW DO I GET RID OF BED BUGS?

## What can I do right now?

The following steps will provide some relief from bed bugs while you wait for your home to be treated with insecticides:

### DO

#### ✓ Take care of bed bug bites

- Resist the urge to scratch
- See your doctor if bites develop an infection or if you have an allergic reaction to the bites



#### ✓ Purchase a bed bug-proof encasement for your mattress and bed base

- Encasements stop bed bugs from getting into your mattress, and stop any bugs already in the mattress from getting out
- Encasements work best if you put them on your bed after the first professional insecticide treatment
- Keep the encasement on your bed for at least 12 months to make sure all bed bugs in your mattress have died
- See **page 13** for how to order bed bug-proof encasements



### DO NOT

- ✗ Use insect spray yourself, as this can increase health risks for you and spread the bed bugs around your home



## Pest control inspection

It is important for a professional pest control company to inspect your home to find all the bed bugs.

The Office of Housing or your landlord may be able to help you organise a professional inspection.

## Getting your home ready for insecticide treatment

Depending on how many bed bugs are in your home, you may need to only clean your bedroom, or you may need to clean your entire home.

If you are unable to clean your home yourself, the pest control specialist or your landlord may be able to organise this for you.

**See page 16 for a handy checklist to help you get ready for insecticide treatment.**

## Tidying up your home

After the inspection:

- ✓ **Tidy up** as much clutter as possible in your home as this limits the places that bed bugs can hide
- ✓ Put all **bedding, curtains and clothing** in sealed plastic bags
- ✓ If you have a major problem with bed bugs, your pest control specialist may ask you to place **all items in your home** in sealed plastic bags



## Vacuuuming

- ✓ **Vacuum** the floor and all soft furniture items (e.g. mattresses and couches) using a vacuum with a disposable dust bag
- ✓ Straight after vacuuming, put the **dust bag** in a sealed plastic bag and throw it away in an outside rubbish bin
- ✗ **DO NOT** spray insect spray on your vacuum cleaner as it may cause an explosion or fire



## Moving Furniture

- ✓ **Move furniture** away from the walls, so that the areas behind them can be treated
- ✗ Do not move your furniture out of the room it is in, as this may spread the bed bugs around your home



## Safe disposal of items

- ✓ To safely **throw away** items that may contain bed bugs, put them in a sealed plastic bag, clearly label with 'bed bugs', and take straight to an outside rubbish bin or preferably to the tip



## Treating clothing, curtains and bedding

On the day of insecticide treatment:

- ✓ Put all of your **bedding, clothing and curtains** in sealed plastic bags ready for treatment in **ONE** of the following ways:
  1. **Wash all items on a hot cycle** of at least 60 degrees; or
  2. Put items in a **clothes dryer on high heat** for at least 30 minutes; or
  3. Have items **dry cleaned**; or
  4. Place the items in sealed bags in the **freezer** for at least 24 hours
- ✓ Keep your clean items in sealed plastic bags until after the second insecticide treatment to stop bed bugs from getting back into them



## Insecticide treatment

The pest control specialist will need to complete at least two insecticide treatments of your home to kill all bed bugs and their eggs.

## After insecticide treatment

- ✗ **DO NOT** vacuum or clean the floors for two weeks after each insecticide treatment as you will remove the chemicals that kill the bed bugs
- ✓ **DO** let the Office of Housing or your landlord know immediately if you suspect bed bugs are still active two weeks after the second insecticide treatment

# HOW DO I KEEP MY HOME FREE OF BED BUGS?

Bed bugs can get into any home, but here are some handy hints to reduce the chance of getting them in the future:



## DO NOT

- ✗ **Pick up second hand items from the street** (unless you can wash or dry them on a high heat before taking them into your home, see **page 10** for instructions)
- ✗ **Store belongings under the bed**



## DO

- ✓ **Contact a pest control manager or your landlord** as soon as you suspect you have an infestation
- ✓ **Cover your mattress and base with a bed bug-proof encasement** (see **page 13** for how to order encasements)
- ✓ **Keep your home clean** to discourage bed bugs from spreading
- ✓ **Reduce clutter in your home** as this limits the places that bed bugs can hide

If you have difficulty with household chores and you have a disability or are an older person, you may be able to access ongoing Home Care support from the council (see **page 15** for contact details)



...How do I keep my home free of bed bugs?

### To be really safe:

- ✓ **Get rid of the head board on your bed**
- ✓ **Replace wooden and wicker bed frames with metal bed frames**
- ✓ **Use light coloured sheets and paint furniture white** so that bed bugs will be easy to spot in future
- ✓ **Seal cracks in your furniture and walls**



# HELPFUL CONTACTS

For South Melbourne and surrounding areas

## Insecticide treatment

**To request insecticide treatment for your home:**

The Office of Housing  
Level 2, 120 Clarendon Street, Southbank  
8646 3600

## Bed bug prevention

**'Bug-Lock' mattress encasements:**

Protect-A-Bed  
Snugfit Australia  
1300 857 123  
info@protectabed.net.au

ProPest  
Pest Control Pty Ltd  
9761 5007

*ProPest offer a discounted rate on mattress encasements*

## Emotional support

**If bed bugs have caused you emotional distress and you would like to talk to someone:**

Inner South Community Health Service  
Coventry Street, South Melbourne  
9690 9144

Port Phillip Community Group  
South Melbourne Town Hall  
220 Bank Street, South Melbourne  
9209 6830

## **Housing support**

Home Ground – SHASP (Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program)  
122 Chapel Street, St Kilda  
9537 7888

## **Financial support**

**To purchase new furniture or bed bug prevention items using the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS):**

Port Phillip Community Group  
South Melbourne Town Hall  
220 Bank Street, South Melbourne  
9209 6830

### **Emergency relief:**

Port Phillip Community Group  
South Melbourne Town Hall  
220 Bank Street, South Melbourne  
9209 6830

Uniting Care  
319 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne  
9690 1188

### **Financial counselling:**

Inner South Community Health Service  
Coventry Street, South Melbourne  
9690 9144

## Home support services

**To find out how to receive Home Care from the City of Port Phillip:**

Community Care Intake Officer  
9209 6592  
Private bag 3, St Kilda 3182  
helpcc@portphillip.vic.gov.au

## Medical support

**If you need medical attention due to bed bug bites:**

Dr. G. Belkin  
138 Victoria Avenue, Albert Park  
9690 7837  
*Bulk billing available for all patients*

Sandridge Medical Centre  
183 Bridge Street, Port Melbourne  
9646 3197  
*Bulk billing available for all patients*

Dorcas Street Medical Clinic  
211 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne  
9690 3833  
*Bulk billing for concession and pensioners only*

Chapel Street Medical Centre  
125 Chapel Street, St Kilda  
9534 5151  
*Bulk billing available for Health Care Card holders and children under 16*



# CHECKLIST

## To get your home ready for insecticide treatment

- Tidy up** as much clutter as possible
- Move furniture** away from the walls
- Vacuum** the floor and all soft furniture items (e.g. mattresses and couches)
- Put the vacuum cleaner **dust bag** in a sealed plastic bag, label 'bed bugs' and take straight to an outside rubbish bin or the tip
- On the day of treatment, put all of your **bedding**, clothing and curtains in sealed plastic bags ready for treatment in ONE of the following ways:
  - **Wash all items on a hot cycle** of at least 60 degrees; or
  - Put items in a **clothes dryer on high heat** for at least 30 minutes; or
  - Have items **dry cleaned**; or
  - Place the items in sealed bags in the **freezer** for at least 24 hours
- To **throw away** items that contain bed bugs, put in a sealed plastic bag, label with 'bed bugs', and take straight to an outside rubbish bin or the tip

# REFERENCES

**Compiled and written by Susan Firth-McCoy and Kelly Small for the Home Free project of Port Phillip Community Group, with thanks to the following authors and publications:**

'A code of practice for the control of Bed Bug infestations in Australia, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition', (March 2009), by Stephen Doggett.

'Bed Bugs workshop: Community housing federation of Victoria course notes', (31 March 2009), compiled by Stephen Doggett.

'Better Health Channel fact sheet: Bed Bugs',  
[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

'Fact sheet: Bed Bugs', produced by the Australian Environmental Pest Management Association Limited.

'Guidelines for prevention and management of Bed Bugs in shelters and group living facilities', (2008), by J.L Gangloff-Kauffmann and C. Pichler.

Publications of and communications with ProPest, pest control managers.





**HOME FREE**

Port Phillip Community Group

July 2009