

Biology and Characteristics of Bedbugs

Bedbugs are insects belonging to the order, Hemiptera (半翅目). There are two species of bedbugs causing nuisance to humans, namely the common bedbug, *Cimex lectularius* (溫帶臭蟲), and the tropical bedbug, *Cimex hemipterus* (熱帶臭蟲). The former is distributed worldwide while the latter is mainly found in tropical regions. Both species have been recorded in Hong Kong.

The bedbugs are flat, oval shaped and wingless bugs of about 6mm in length (Fig below). Bedbugs have piercing-sucking mouthparts that enable them to pierce skin and suck blood from their hosts. The food of bedbugs is solely the blood of warm-blooded animals. Bedbugs locate their hosts by responding to the warmth and carbon dioxide emitted by them. Bedbugs are mainly nocturnal and usually hide in cracks, crevices and dark places during the day. Bedbugs are active when ambient light levels are low, especially at night. Typical hiding places of them are in the folds and tufts of mattresses, coils of springs, cracks and hollow posts of bedsteads, and upholstery of chairs and sofas. In heavy infestations, bedbugs are frequently found in places such as behind loose wallpaper, behind pictures on the wall, under door and window casings, behind baseboards and even in light fixtures or cabinets.



Hazards Caused by Bedbugs

Although bedbugs may cause skin irritation and sleepless night as a result of their biting, they are currently not known to spread disease.

Control and Prevention of Bedbugs in Premises

- Wash infested blankets and bedclothes in hot water (60°C) and dried in the sun or hot ironed;
- Treat the bedding of infants, including cribs by physical means rather than with residual insecticide;
- Seal items that cannot be heat-treated in plastic bags and placed in a freezer (-18°C) for 24 hours to kill the bedbugs;



- Apply hot air or steam directly to the cracks and crevices where the insect is found in order to kill them and their eggs;
- Apply Diatomaceous Earth (DE) to the areas found with bedbugs infestation. Facemask, goggles and gloves should be worn when handling DE and vacuum clean DE after the use as it may cause irritation when breathed in or get into the eyes;
- Clean and vacuum premises regularly;
- Inspect bedding and clothing regularly;
- Maintain a non-humid domestic environment;
- Avoid using second-hand furniture; and
- Promptly replace loosened wallpapers, and seal cracks and crevices.



Advice on Bedbugs Control when Travelling Overseas

- Check beds, headboards, bedside tables, pillow, mattresses and cushions, etc., especially the crevices, for bedbugs and change room if there are signs of bedbugs;
- Avoid placing luggage on carpet, place it on cabinet or shelf;
- Keep clothing in luggage and keep luggage closed when not in use;
- Spray outer surface of luggage with insect repellent containing DEET if necessary;
- Inspect luggage, especially compartments and crevices, carefully to see any bedbugs infestation after returning Hong Kong and wash clothes in hot water (60°C);
- Conduct the above-mentioned control measures in premises if bedbugs infestation is detected after the trip; and
- Consider appointing a pest control company for providing professional services on bedbugs control and prevention.



For enquiry, please contact
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Guidelines on Bedbugs Prevention and Control in Domestic Premises

