

## School Health Advisory: BED BUGS

**“Although bed bug bites can be very itchy and can be difficult to get rid of, they are a nuisance and do not carry any diseases.”**

***Michael Rokosky, M.D.***

**Michael Rokosky, M.D.  
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### **THE BUGS**

The adult bed bugs are oval shaped, with flat bodies, brownish, the size of an apple seed. They feed on blood of animals or humans and after feeding their body swells and they turn a reddish color. They have a musty or stale sweet smell produced by glands on their underbelly.

A female bed bug produce hundreds of eggs over her lifetime each the size of a grain of salt. When the eggs hatch they are called nymphs. Nymphs shed their skins 5 times before maturity. They need a blood meal before shedding their skin.

The bugs hide and are not usually seen. Their waste can be seen as dark brown flecks. Blood stains can be found if bugs that have had a meal are smashed when someone rolls over on them.

During the day the bugs hide in the corner of the mattress, bed frame crevices, floors, and walls. At night they come out to feed on human blood. Each meal lasts about 5 minutes.



**Bed Bug**

This is a full-grown bedbug. Bedbugs are small brown bugs which are less than ¼ of an inch (6 mm) long. Bedbugs hide in the seams, folds and creases of mattresses and upholstery. They come out at night. During the day, you might see signs of them, such as shed skin, waste or blood marks on the linens.

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## **THE BITES**

- Suspect bed bugs if there are over 3 red bumps in a group or a linear pattern.
- Bed bugs use their proboscis a, small tube on their face, to pierce the skin and suck out blood.
- The redness, bumps and itching are the result of secretions from the bed bug's proboscis leaking into the puncture wound.
- Bites are usually on areas of exposed skin like the arms, legs and face.
- They are usually noted in the morning.
- The redness usually lasts around 3 days. The swelling may last up to 7 days. The itch may last for 2 weeks.
- A large hive does not mean an allergic reaction.
- Redness does not mean there is an infection.



**Bed Bug Bite**

This is what a bed bug bite looks like. It can take a few days for the bites to appear after a bed bug bites you. The bites are usually itchy and often have a burning feeling. Try not to scratch and break the skin because this can cause an infection.

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## **THE CARE OF BED BUG BITES**

- To reduce itching use 1% hydrocortisone cream 3 times a day till the itch is gone.
- If the itch continues add an antihistamine like Benadryl by mouth.
- Cut the fingernails short because it is usually scratching that causes infection.
- Insect repellents do not keep bed bugs from biting. DEET and permethrin do not work.
- Call Your Doctor If:
  - Bite looks infected – redness gets larger after 48 hours.
  - Large red bumps last more than 7 days.
  - You think you need to see the doctor.
  - You think the rash is getting worse.

## **REMOVAL OF BED BUGS**

- Getting rid of bed bugs requires a licensed pest control service.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Bedbug Bite Info: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/from-insects-animals/Pages/Bedbug-Bites.aspx>
2. Bedbug Infestation, Treatment & Extermination Info: <https://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/guide/bedbugs-infestation#1>