**Introduction**

Bed bugs are small blood-sucking insects that feed exclusively on human and animal blood when asleep. The bite is painless and rarely awakens a sleeping person, but produces large, itchy welts on the skin, which may become a nuisance. Bed bugs are attracted to carbon dioxide and body heat, but not odors. They are not known to transmit or spread disease, but may cause allergic reactions from their saliva in sensitive people. They can live for several months without a blood meal.

**Physical Description**

Adult bed bugs are light brown to reddish-brown, flattened, oval-shaped wingless insect, and between ¼ and ⅜ inch long. When engorged with food (blood), the body becomes elongated and swollen, and the color changes from brown to dull-red.

**How a Home Becomes Infested**

Bed bugs can be carried into a home through luggage, clothing, or other personal items during travel. Bed bugs can also get into a home via theaters, hotels, roaming houses, public transportation, used mattresses or furniture that have been infested with bed bugs.

**Life Cycle**

Bed bugs have five immature nymph life stages before entering the final mature adult stage. They shed their exoskeleton after each stage, leading to a total of six molts. It takes a minimum of two months to complete a life cycle. The typical life span of a bed bug is about 10 months.

**Signs and Symptoms**

Signs of bed bug infestations may include:

- Complaints of bug bites during the night
- Dark reddish or brownish spots on bed sheets, pillowcases, mattresses
- A distinct musty odor
- Small, itchy red bumps on your skin from bed bug bites
- Bed bug fecal spots, egg shells, or shed skins in areas where bed bugs hide

**Treatment**

To eliminate bed bugs, call a licensed pest control professional. Other treatment methods include:

- Household surface sprays containing approved pesticides.
- Wash all bedding, linens, curtains, rugs, carpets, and clothes in hot water and dry them on the highest dryer setting.
- Vacuum home using a HEPA-filtered vacuum cleaner
- Wipe down headboards and bed frames
- Use a silicon-based sealant to seal shut all cracks, crevices, and entry points in walls, especially within 20 feet of any spot where bed bug bites happened
- Do not have the mattress treated with residual insecticides.

**Prevention and Control**

Some prevention tips include:

- Keep home clutter-free
- Vacuum home daily
- Change linen weekly
- Check used furniture for bed bugs before bringing it into the home
- Apply clear silicone to the seam where the wall meets the floor