



Guidelines for dealing with Bed Bugs in a School Setting

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Introduction

Actual bed bug infestations in schools are uncommon, more often a few bed bugs will hitchhike from an infested home on a student's possessions. On the occasion that an infestation starts, it will be because bed bugs have found a site where people rest or sit for a time. A common example of this is with the younger grades, or pre-school, where rest time or nap time still occurs.

It is important to remain vigilant for bed bugs in the school. Treating a bed bug infestation is difficult and costly. The sooner an infestation is detected the easier it will be to control the infestation. In addition, there are steps that can be taken to prevent future infestations.

Responding to Students with Bed Bugs

The most common way for bed bugs to enter a school is through "hitchhiking" from an infested site. Usually this will be from a student, staff or teacher's home which has a bed bug infestation. While teachers and staff can be more easily addressed dealing with students or parents can be challenging, especially if the family cannot afford proper control measures or their landlord refuses to properly treat their home.

Students dealing with a bed bug infestation in their home may show signs of bites. Different people react differently to bed bug bites, some people do not react at all and others have severe allergic reactions. Depending on the student's immune response to bed bug bites and the severity of the infestation there may be a few or many welts on the face, torso and limbs. Bed Bugs tend to bite on skin that is exposed during sleep or rest. The visible marks and itchiness may make the student very uncomfortable. Students may also display anxiousness and/or sleepiness due to interrupted sleep as a result of bed bugs biting them.

Bed bugs are not associated with uncleanliness or socioeconomic status, but this insect has a substantial social stigma.

Steps that can be taken if a student's home is known to have a bed bug infestation:

- Do not send a child home from school if they are known or suspected to have a bed bug infestation at home. Missed school days have a negative impact on children and it can take many weeks to control a bed bug infestation.
- Provide the student with educational materials they can take home with them (factsheets are available at www.bedbugs.umn.edu)
 - Send a letter to the student's parent or guardian requesting that they take steps to reduce the risk of bed bugs being transported to school. A sample letter is available at www.bedbugs.umn.edu/public-facilities/bed-bugs-in-school
- Consider sending a letter home with all children in the affected classroom.
- If bed bugs have been found on a student's belongings there are three ways to discreetly handle this:
 - Provide the student with plastic bags or a plastic bin in which to store their belongings while they are at school
 - Isolate the student's belongings
 - Reduce the number of items that the student has to transport between school and home.
- In a discreet manner, regularly inspect the student's desk and or locker for bed bugs.
- In the younger grades you may want to consider regular use of plastic tote boxes for storage of student belongings
- Avoid accumulation of clothes, shoes and boots in the classroom.

Responding To Bed Bugs in the School

- If bed bugs are suspected in the school, work with a Pest Management Professional (PMP) to inspect and treat the school. Insecticides that are available over the counter are not effective against bed bugs.
- Try to capture a bed bug without squishing it. The bug can be put in a plastic bag or on a piece of clear tape and then given to a professional for identification.
- Hard surfaces can be cleaned with hot soapy water to reduce the risk of bed bugs in these areas.

Preventing Bed Bugs in the School

To prevent a bed bug infestation in the school be proactive.

- Educate all members of the school community
 - Provide educational materials to staff and parents/guardians.
 - Explain what your school is doing to prevent and control bed bugs.
- Keep the facility clean and uncluttered. Bed Bugs are not associated with uncleanliness, but a clean facility makes it easier to detect bed bugs before an infestation gets established.
 - If children take naps at school regularly put the bedding in the dryer on a high setting for 30 min. This will kill all stages of bed bug development. If there is clothing present in the school setting, for example dress up clothes, or theater costumes these items should also be regularly put through the dryer. For additional information on laundering please see the fact sheet *Laundering Items to Kill Bed Bugs*. (www.bedbugs.umn.edu/bed-bug-control-in-residences/laundrying-bedbug-control)
 - Keep all areas as uncluttered as possible
 - Regularly clean; lost-and-found, sleeping areas, upholstered furniture, and wall mounted items (pictures, clocks, signs, mirrors, etc.). See the factsheet *Vacuuming to Capture Bed Bugs* (www.bedbugs.umn.edu/bed-bug-control-in-residences/vacuuming-to-capture-bed-bugs) for information on how to properly use a vacuum in a bed bug situation.
 - Store items (bedding, clothes, coats, bags) in clear plastic containers when possible.
 - Regularly inspect; lost-and-found, sleeping areas, upholstered furniture, wall mounted items (pictures, clocks, signs, mirrors, etc.) for signs of bed bugs. See the factsheet *Have I Found a Bed Bug?* (www.bedbugs.umn.edu/have-i-found-a-bed-bug) for information on identifying bed bugs.
 - Consider period inspection by a bed bug detecting canine, if bed bugs are an issue in the population you serve.

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