



BED BUGS

A Toolkit for Schools

The Ocean County Health Department has received numerous reports and concerns regarding bed bug infestation(s). Although bed bugs are becoming a common problem that significantly impacts our general quality of life, they are not known to transmit disease. The home of any person can be infested by bed bugs, regardless of ethnic background, type of home or socio-economic status. As this problem escalates, although rare, bed bugs may become an issue in our schools. It is important that if this happens, the school takes proactive actions to prevent infestation and stop them from spreading within the school setting. The following are GUIDELINES that have been gathered and organized from public health agencies and academic institutions throughout the United States. They can be integrated into your individual school district policy developed regarding the presence of bedbugs.

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on people while they sleep. Bed bugs do not live on a person. Bed bugs usually hide during the day and come out to feed during the night. Adult bed bugs have flat, rusty-red-colored oval bodies, are about the size of an apple seed, big enough to be easily seen, but often hide in cracks in furniture, floors, or walls.

A bed bug bite may develop into an itchy welt that is similar to a mosquito bite. Bed bug bites do not transmit disease but their bites are a nuisance and can cause significant itchiness, secondary infections, anxiety and sleeplessness. Infestations are also very

difficult and expensive to control. They can also be transmitted from one location to another in backpacks, clothing, luggage, books and other items. Bed bugs are rarely transported into a house by pets.

Do you think your classroom is infested with bed bugs?

Actual bed bug infestations in schools are uncommon and it is necessary that the bug be identified as a bed bug, which should be done by a pest management professional, licensed by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). It is possible that a few bed bugs could get into a school from an infested home by hiding in a student's clothing or backpack. These bed bugs could be carried home by another student. This can be a major concern to the school – bed bugs are very difficult and expensive to eradicate.

If students are getting bitten or bed bugs are discovered, then a NJDEP licensed pest control applicator should be contacted for assistance in identifying and eradicating bed bugs, as directed from your individual school district policy regarding bed bugs.

By law (NJSA13:15-19, NJAC7:30-13), public schools in Ocean County must have an integrated pest management (IPM) plan in place (see related information attached). This will assist all schools greatly in controlling any type of bug infestation, including bed bugs.

What you should do or NOT do to eliminate bed bugs from your classroom? (According to your School District Policy)

- DO NOT allow staff that is untrained to identify bugs and apply pesticides on school property. Contact an integrated pest management company as soon as possible. The law states that only professionally trained and licensed applicators can apply pesticides (even ready-to-use products like sprays) in schools and in compliance with the school's integrated pest management plan.
- Any backpacks, lunchboxes, and other items that go back and forth to school can also be inspected daily and sealed in plastic containers to prevent bed bugs from getting into them.
- Hard surfaces can be cleaned with standard cleaning products.
- If bed bugs have been found repeatedly in a particular classroom, have the room inspected by a pest management professional and other trained staff.

What if you find a bed bug on a student?

If you find a bed bug on a student, this may be an indication that the student has bed bugs in his/her home. **DON'T PANIC.** Remember, people do not become infested with bed bugs, bed bugs feed on people. Bed bugs can crawl on or off a person or their belongings at any time. School districts might want to consider some of the following procedures for adoption in your individual school policy, which could guide actions if a suspected bed bug is found.

- It is important to treat each child with discretion, dignity and respect when dealing with this issue. Any bugs noticed should be removed and collected for identification after removing the child discreetly from the classroom Try to keep the specimens as intact as possible.
- If a confirmed bed bug was found on the student, the school principal or nurse should contact the student's parents or guardian to inform them of the bed bug presence on their child. Educational materials should be provided to the family.
- A thorough inspection by the school district's contracted professional pest management company should be done to identify affected areas.
- The school principal or nurse should consider notifying the affected class or classes. *Please see the sample notification letter at the end of the document.*
- **Individual School Districts should make all appropriate determinations, especially removal of students/excluding students from school.**
- The school's licensed pesticide applicator should be contacted to address bed bugs or any pest infestation issue.
- Notify the school custodial staff to vacuum the affected area during the end of the day cleaning routine. Place that vacuum bag into a plastic bag/garbage bag and tightly seal for disposal (or for bagless vacuums, empty contents of vacuum into a plastic bag/garbage bag and tightly seal for disposal. Clean the vacuum.
- Ongoing pest management that includes the use of pesticides indoors should be overseen by the school principal or designee and be performed by a NJDEP licensed pesticide applicator and must conform to the school's integrated pest management plan.

What if one of my students has a bed bug infestation in his/her home?

It is extremely important to be sensitive to a student's problem if he or she is dealing with a bed bug infestation at home. Although bed bugs have nothing to do with cleanliness or socioeconomic status, there is certainly a stigma that may come with having bed bugs at home. Parents may be embarrassed and hesitant to admit having bed bugs and students may also be embarrassed and not want others to know. Students may come into school tired, anxious or afraid because of this problem. Discretion in counseling students is strongly recommended.

Schools should work sensitively with parents of any student living in an infested home to develop strategies for preventing the further spread of bed bugs (according to individual school district's policy).

The following are guidelines/suggestions used in other states and could be adapted to your school policy:

- If bed bugs are found in your school, you may want to consider notifying the affected classes. Please see the sample notification letter at the end of this document.
- Always have educational material available in as many languages as necessary. If you are sending letters home, please see the attached letter.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/bedbugs/DS00663>

<http://www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/phss/edmat.htm#ehh> (bed bug fact sheets, bed bugs in the home, treating bed bugs)

http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/whats_bugging_you/bed_bugs/bedbugs_faqs.asp

<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/bedbugs/>

www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/ipm.htm

Bed Bug Pesticide Alert

- Never use a pesticide indoors that is intended for outdoor use. It is very dangerous and won't solve your bed bug problem.

- Using the wrong pesticide or using it incorrectly to treat for bed bugs can make you sick, may not solve the problem, and could even make it worse by causing the bed bugs to hide where the pesticide won't reach them.
- Check if the product is effective against bedbugs -- if a pest isn't listed on the product label, the pesticide has not been tested on that pest and it may not be effective. Don't use a product or allow a pest control operator to treat your home unless bed bugs are named on the product label.
- Before using any pesticide product, **READ THE LABEL FIRST**, then follow the directions for use.
- Keep in mind that any pesticide product without an EPA registration number has not been reviewed by EPA, so it has not been determined how well the product works.
- All pesticide use should be conducted by a NJ Department of Environmental Protection licensed company or individual.

**** SAMPLE****

Bed Bugs Found in a Classroom

Parent Notification Letter

(Use appropriate school letterhead)

This is a Sample Letter adapted from the *Michigan Department of Community Health and the Michigan Bedbug Working Group*. Individual school districts may adopt this or a similar letter according to their needs, regarding bed bugs, if necessary.

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We recently found a bed bug in your child's classroom. Bed bugs are a nuisance, but their bites are not known to spread disease. Bed bugs are usually active at night and feed on human blood. The bite does not hurt at first, but it may become swollen and itchy, much like a mosquito bite. Watch for clusters of bites, sometimes in a line, on exposed areas of the body. If you have medical concerns for you or your child, please contact your doctor.

The source of bed bugs often cannot be determined, as bed bugs may be found in many places including hotels, planes, and movie theaters. Bed bugs are rarely brought into a home by pets. Even though it is unlikely for bed bugs to spread and infest a school, *(fill in your school district here)* will conduct an inspection and, if needed, will implement our integrated pest management plan.

(Fill in your school district here) will continue to work to address and eradicate bed bugs and any other pests, provide thorough inspections of schools, and have licensed pest control specialists assist with pest management.

Contact your physician or school nurse for proper care and treatment of bed bug bites. If you have any questions regarding bed bugs in your school, please contact the Principal *(add principal's name and contact info here)*. An informational pamphlet is attached for your review. If you have any questions regarding bed bugs found in your home, contact the Ocean County Health Department at 732-341-9700 or the Ocean County Health Department website at www.ochd.org. If you live on Long Beach Island, please call the Long Beach Island Health Department at 609-492-1212.

Sincerely,

Principal

Integrated Pest Management

The current national problem with bed bugs is likely due to the convergence of three human behaviors: lack of awareness of the historical and biological link humans have with bed bugs, increased international travel, and past over-reliance on pesticides. Bed bugs are a "nest parasite" that resides in the human nest – the bedroom. Over time, bed bugs have evolved to develop resistance to many of the chemical pesticides currently used. In fact, bed bugs were widely resistant to DDT by the mid-1950s.

Integrated pest management (IPM) is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that relies on a combination of common-sense practices. IPM programs use current,

comprehensive information on the life cycles of pests and their interaction with people and the environment. This information, in combination with available pest control methods, is used to manage pest damage by the most economical means, and with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment.

Bed bug control is most effective when an IPM approach is implemented with diligent participation by the residents. In multi-family housing, diligent participation is also required of the building management. IPM takes advantage of all appropriate pest management options, including the judicious use of pesticides. Although bed bugs may sometimes be controlled by non-chemical means alone, this approach is often very difficult, potentially less effective, and usually more resource intensive. A comprehensive IPM program to control bed bugs may include a number of methods such as:

- Using monitoring devices
- Applying heat treatment
- Sealing cracks and crevices to remove hiding places
- Using non-chemical pesticides (such as diatomaceous earth) and judicious use of effective chemical pesticides
- Inspecting infested areas, plus surrounding living spaces
- Checking for bed bugs on luggage and clothes when returning home from a trip
- Looking for bed bugs or signs of infestation on secondhand items before bringing the items home
- Correctly identifying the pest
- Keeping records – including dates when and locations where pests are found
- Cleaning all items within a bed bug infested living area
- Reducing clutter where bed bugs can hide
- Eliminating bed bug habitats
- Physically removing bed bugs through cleaning and vacuuming and disposing of vacuum bag
- Using pesticides carefully according to the label directions
- Following up inspections and possible treatments
- Raising awareness through education on prevention of bed bugs

Information and resources gathered from:

- *The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)
- *Cincinnati Public Schools (www.cps-k12.org/general/health/health.htm)
- *New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
(www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/vector/vector-faq1.shtml)
- *Cornell University Integrated Pest Management Program
(www.nysipm.cornell.edu/whatiscomm.asp)
- *United States Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov)

The following chart was accessed from the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Michigan Bed Bug Working Group.

School Responsibility:

Providing a healthy, pest-free environment in which students can excel

Parent/Caregiver Responsibility:

Providing a safe and healthy living environment for the student

