

The bedbug lives on humans as a blood-sucking parasite but also attacks other mammals and poultry. With the help of humans, it has spread all over the world and can be found throughout Sweden.

# The bedbug – a blood-sucking traveller

**APART FROM THE BEDBUG**, *Cimex lectularius*, which is particularly associated with humans, there is also the bat-bug, *Cimex pipistrelli*, and the martin bug, *Oeciacus hirundinis*, that can bite humans. There are two other species in the Tropics that feed especially off humans.

**AN ADULT BEDBUG IS 4-5 MM LONG**, the size of an apple pip, with a broad, oval, flattened body. Their colour changes from a light yellow/brown to reddish-brown when they have sucked blood. An unfed bedbug can be almost transparent. The surface of their bodies is covered in microscopic, golden yellow hairs, giving it a banded appearance.

**THE FEMALE BEDBUG LAYS 1-5 EGGS A DAY**, a total of 200-500 eggs per female and lifetime. The eggs, which have a pearl-like colour and are about 1 mm long, hatch within one to two weeks. The newly hatched bedbug can start sucking blood immediately.

**BEDBUGS STAY HIDDEN IN CRACKS** and in cavities during the day and come out to feed during the night. They often bite places on the body that are not covered by clothes and are most active about an hour before dawn. Attracted by warmth and carbon dioxide, the insect looks for a host (a human) to feast on its blood. As it feeds, the bedbug can be disturbed by its host moving. It will then stop for a while and start feeding again on a new place. It is therefore quite common to have several bites close together.

At a temperature of 15-20°C, the bedbug sucks blood about once every 8th day and more often if the temperature is higher. It can go without food for long periods. At room temperature, the adult bedbug can manage without blood for a month or two and for about a year at 13°C.

**THE BITE ITSELF IS NOT PAINFUL** but many people have an allergic reaction to the bedbug's saliva which it injects into the host whilst feeding. Swelling and redness as well as some pain and itching are common symptoms.

**IT HAS BEEN SUSPECTED** of spreading disease and pathogenic organisms but there is no really convincing evidence for this. In addition, the bedbug is often wrongly associated with dirt. This does not affect the bedbug's occurrence at all.

They can spread to a building via the transport of second-hand, infested furniture or personal belongings. A bedbug can't jump or fly; it can only move by walking.



The bedbug (*Cimex lectularius*)



Clear signs of bedbugs on a bed-frame. The black dots are bedbug droppings.



Blankets, bed-linen, etc., are common places to find bedbugs.



A close-up of a bedbug.

## Signs of bedbugs

**RELIABLE SIGNS** indicating the presence of bedbugs are dark spots of droppings, bits of leftover skin and live bedbugs in places where they crawl in and hide. An opening as small as the thickness of a credit-card is sufficient.

**YOU NORMALLY FIND BEDBUGS** in cavities in bed-frames as well as in mattresses, bed-linen and bedspreads. Other places where they can be found include wall pictures, bedside tables, stuffed furniture, skirting boards, cracks in wooden floors, behind unstuck wallpaper, plug sockets, door/window-frames, cables, pipes, etc.

*Bedbugs must be decontaminated by a professional. Contact the local pest control company Anticimex if you discover these signs. Visit [www.anticimex.se](http://www.anticimex.se) for more information.*