



# Bed Bugs In the House – Panic Time!

Debbie Hurst RN, BSN, FAPIC, CIC  
North Dakota Infection Prevention Conference 2026



## Objectives

1. Define the life cycle of bed bugs
2. Describe recommended ways that bed bugs are managed in healthcare
3. Define the role of integrated pest management in the healthcare setting



How long does it take a Bed Bug to travel 100 feet?



## How Long to Travel 100 Feet?

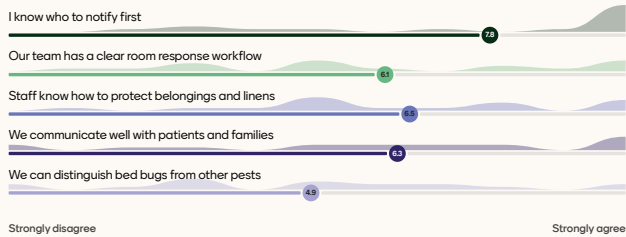
- A bed bug may crawl about 3 to 4 feet per minute
- **That means 100 feet could take about 25 to 35 minutes**
- In real settings, movement is usually slower and interrupted
- The practical message: bed bugs can spread farther than expected



## What Are Bed Bugs?

- Small, wingless insects that feed on blood
- Hide in seams, cracks, furniture, and belongings near their food source
- Common sign: bites in lines or clusters, but symptoms vary
- Bed bugs are a nuisance pest, not a sign of poor hygiene

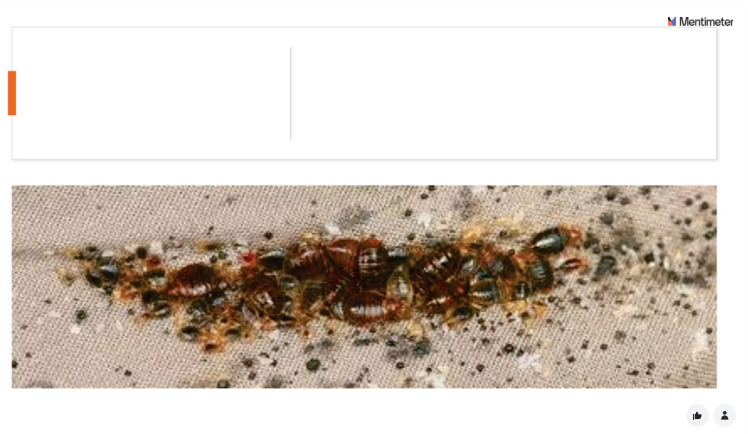
## How confident are you in your current bedbug response process?



## Bed Bug Growth Cycle


- Egg – tiny, white, and hard to see
- Nymph – small, pale, and translucent; becomes darker after feeding
- Instars – 5 immature stages, each larger after a blood meal
- Adult – flat, oval, reddish-brown, and about the size of an apple seed





## Bed Bug Activities and Habits

- Hide during the day in seams, cracks, and clutter
- Come out at night to feed on sleeping hosts
- Travel by hitchhiking on clothing, luggage, and belongings
- Gather near beds, chairs, and other resting areas
- Leave behind shed skins, dark spots, and eggs



## What Diseases Do Bed Bugs Carry?

- Bed bugs are not known to transmit diseases to people
- Their main impact is bites, irritation, and discomfort
- They can also contribute to stress and sleep loss
- Scratching bites can lead to skin infection



TRUE or FALSE: I often wonder why bed bug management is the infection preventionist's role?"

A photograph of a bed bug insect. Overlaid on the insect is a poll chart with two options: 'True!' with 9 votes (represented by 9 black circles) and 'False, I have never thought about it.' with 5 votes (represented by 5 green circles).

9 True!

5 False, I have never thought about it.



## The Infection Preventionist's Role

- Assure that policies and procedures are per current healthcare recommendations
- Provide education to all affected disciplines on the process
- When reported: Confirm the concern and avoid overreacting and provide instructions to capture.
- Coordinate with environmental services, nursing, and facilities (follow your approved policy/procedure)
- Be a calming voice of reason, remind staff of confidentiality, patient rights, stigma issues
- Document findings and communicate next steps promptly
- Serve as expert resource for facility and be involved with the integrated pest management process

## Prevention and Environmental Controls

- Inspect high-risk areas and response supplies routinely
- Reduce clutter to limit hiding places
- Follow approved policies and procedures (laundering, bagging, and disposal steps)
- Escalate to pest management when infestation is suspected



## How many bed bugs are in an infestation?

- There is no single typical number
- It may be a few bugs or a large hidden population
- Severe infestations can reach hundreds or thousands
- Even a small number should trigger a response



## How Long Do Bed Bugs Typically Live?

- Bed bugs typically live about 4 to 6 months
- Some can survive much longer in ideal conditions
- Adults may live for months without feeding
- This makes early detection and response important





Mentimeter



All that crawl  
are not Bed  
Bugs

Mentimeter



## How Are Bed Bugs Found?

- Live bugs in mattress seams, bed frames, loose wall paper, and furniture joints
- Tiny white eggs and shed skins
- Small dark spots from droppings
- Blood spots on sheets or upholstery
- A sweet, musty smell in heavier infestations

Mentimeter



Mentimeter



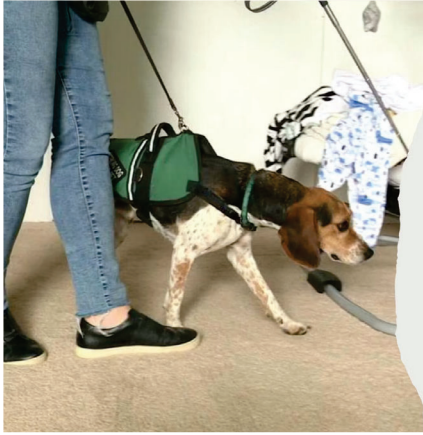


Who am I?



## How Else Are Bed Bugs Detected?

- Visual inspection of beds, seams, cracks, and furniture
- Look for eggs, shed skins, dark droppings, and blood spots
- Use monitoring traps or interceptors under bed legs
- Check luggage, clothing, and nearby clutter
- Trained detection dogs can help find hidden infestations



Mentimeter



## Do Bed Bugs Feed on Animals or Humans?

- Bed bugs can feed on humans and other warm-blooded animals
- They may feed on pets or wildlife when available
- In healthcare and homes, humans are the most common host

Mentimeter



Mentimeter



## Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

- Is an environmentally sensitive, sustainable approach to managing pests (insects, weeds, diseases) by combining biological, cultural, physical, and chemical tools.
- Prioritizes prevention and uses pesticides only as a last resort to minimize risks to human health, beneficial organisms, and the environment.
- Helps prevent "panic in the house" by being proactive.

Mentimeter



## Integrated Pest Management

- Integrated programs use prevention, monitoring, documentation, and coordinated response
- They involve infection prevention, facilities, environmental services, and pest management
- They focus on long-term control and fewer repeat events
- **Non-integrated programs** react only after pests are reported
- **Non-integrated programs** often rely on isolated treatments and less follow-up



Who am I?



Confessions of a Bed Bug



Thank you! Debbie Hurst ([Debbie@handsonic.org](mailto:Debbie@handsonic.org))

## Recommended Resources:

Virginia Dept. Agriculture, "Bed Bugs Biology and Behavior": <https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pdf/bb-biology1.pdf>

AHCA/NCAL: [www.ahcanca.org/Quality/Clinical-Practice/Documents/Hot%20Topic\\_Bed%20Bugs%20and%20Head%20Lice\\_FINA\\_L.pdf](http://www.ahcanca.org/Quality/Clinical-Practice/Documents/Hot%20Topic_Bed%20Bugs%20and%20Head%20Lice_FINA_L.pdf)

American Healthcare Association Infection Preventionist Forum sign up location: <https://www.ahcanca.org/Quality/Clinical-Practice/Pages/default.aspx>

