

**Bedbugs** (*Climex lectularis*) are reddish brown beetles, which feed on human blood. They hide in and around sleeping areas and come out to feed while the host is asleep. They do not carry disease through their bites, but are nonetheless loathed for their feeding habits and effects of their bites.



Characteristic sites for bites are the face, arms, legs and back. Brown specks are often also seen on bed linen, where drops of blood left after feeding have dried.

Adult bedbugs are around 5-6 mm long, with a rounded, reddish brown body. Some bedbugs appear rather longer and narrower in the abdomen than others. The abdomen is marked with horizontal bands. They have rudimentary wings, which are not visible to the naked eye. They cannot fly, relying on crawling or being carried in luggage or furniture to move around.

Bedbug eggs are around 0.8 to 1.3 mm long by 0.4 to 0.6 mm broad and slightly curved in shape. They are found cemented to the surfaces of the places where the adults hide during the day e.g. bed frame.

## Life cycle

The length of the complete lifecycle from egg to adult depends upon temperature and frequency of feeding. The complete cycle from egg to adult will normally take between 9 to 18 weeks. Eggs hatch into juvenile bedbugs, called nymphs. These look similar to the adults, but are smaller and lighter in colour. There are 5 nymphal stages, each stage becoming larger and darker. A nymph requires a blood meal to moult and progress to the next nymphal stage. At normal room temperature and with an adequate food supply, adults can live for 9-18 months. Bedbugs do not like cold conditions. In conditions continuously under 13°C, many adults will fall dormant and many nymphs and eggs will die. Adults can survive for up to a year in cool conditions without a blood meal. Eggs can remain dormant in a vacant house for years.

## Hiding places

Bedbugs remain still during the day, hiding in dark cracks and crevices around sleeping areas. Areas such as behind and underneath beds, underneath and around the seams of mattresses, behind furniture and pictures on walls are all sites, which may be used. There can also be found inside bedside electrical equipment such as clocks and radios.

Although Bedbugs are traditionally associated with conditions of poor hygiene, this does not mean that clean homes are immune from infestation, nor that the presence of an infestation mean that a house is not clean. Bed bugs can often be brought back in luggage following trips abroad.

## Treatment

Harrow Council Pest Control offers an affordable, chargeable service for domestic and commercial premises for bedbugs. Please visit our website or telephone us for further information on pricing

Treatment is by the application of an insecticidal spray in the affected areas (usually bedrooms). Other areas such as the living room may also be treated if you are being bitten there. Two sprays are applied, at least 2 weeks apart and utilising different insecticides.

To be effective, the insecticide has to reach the place where the bugs are hiding, and so you must help the treatment by following the advice given by the pest control officer. If after a month, you report that you are still being bitten, then further inspection will be made and another treatment may be arranged.

### **Preparing for treatment**

The pest officer will survey your property and provide advice on preparing the property for treatment. The more access that is provided for treatment, then the more effective the treatment will be

Prior to the treatment, you will need to clear as much of the rooms to be treated as possible, to allow the insecticide to reach all areas. Bed linen should be stripped from the beds and the mattresses tipped to expose both sides. We do not spray clothing or bed linen to avoid overexposure to insecticide, and so these should be put through a wash as hot as the fabric can withstand, to kill any insects infesting it. If mattresses are to be disposed of (which is not usually necessary) then this should be treated before disposal. All cupboards and drawers should be emptied and the contents of these can be placed in sealed plastic sacks.

The insecticide has a residual effect and so after treatment, and so the property should be lived in normally so as to bring out any insects not initial affected by the treatment. We recommend that cleaning of surfaces and vacuuming is avoided for a week to make sure that the insecticide is not accidentally removed. You may therefore wish to do a thorough vacuum and clean before the treatment. If you vacuum up live bugs, make sure the vacuum cleaner is emptied afterwards and the contents are completely removed from the house.

The property or area to be treated should be vacated for the duration of the treatment. People can return to the treated area in a few hours, once the spray has dried.

**Advice on the identification and control of all household pests is provided free of charge and is available by phone, email or via our website.**

Harrow Council  
Community Directorate  
P O Box 18, Civic Centre  
Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 2UT

☎ 020 8424 7666  
Fax: 0845 280 1845

E-mail: [pest.control@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:pest.control@harrow.gov.uk)  
Web site: [www.harrowcommercialservices.co.uk](http://www.harrowcommercialservices.co.uk)  
[www.harrow.gov.uk](http://www.harrow.gov.uk)