

## INTRODUCTION

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on human blood. They are usually active at night when people are sleeping. Their bites are initially painless, but for some people, can later turn into itchy skin welts. While bed bugs are a nuisance and can be worrisome, they are not known to cause or spread disease.

Bed bugs can be found in many public places, including movie theaters, planes, and hotels. Home infestations are increasingly common throughout New York City and the country. Anyone can get bed bugs and bed bugs are not a sign of dirty living conditions. Although people can unknowingly carry bed bugs with them into a school building, schools are not a friendly environment for bed bugs to live and reproduce, and the risk of transferring bed bugs from person to person in a school is very small. One bed bug does not constitute an infestation and finding a bed bug in a school does not mean that the school is infested.

The Department of Education (DOE) is committed to identifying pests, providing thorough inspections of schools, and having licensed pest control specialists treat rooms as appropriate. Following the protocol below when you suspect that you have found a bed bug in your school can help ensure accurate identification and response. Other insects can resemble bed bugs, so it is important to have the specimen positively identified by a trained member of the DOE Pest Management Unit.

This Information Kit contains instructions for submitting a suspected bed bug for identification, information about school bed bug inspections and treatment by the DOE Pest Management Unit, tips for minimizing the risk of bed bugs in schools, an FAQ, and additional resources. For more information on bed bugs, including steps you can take in your own home to minimize the risk of bed bugs, please visit the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's [Vector Surveillance and Control](#) website, which includes a brochure on [Preventing and Getting Rid of Bed Bugs Safely](#), or call 311.

## PROTOCOL FOR IDENTIFYING AND TREATING BED BUGS IN SCHOOLS

There are two ways to submit a suspected bed bug specimen to the DOE Pest Management Unit for identification: you may either send the dead insect by mail or email pictures of the pest to [bedbugconcerns@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:bedbugconcerns@schools.nyc.gov). Do not submit both a specimen by mail and images via email.

### Submitting a specimen by mail

1. If you find an insect you suspect to be a bed bug in a person's clothing or any location within a school, collect the specimen using a piece of tape, gauze or tissue. If the specimen is caught on clear tape, simply affix the specimen to a sheet of white paper. Place the specimen in a sealable sandwich size plastic bag, seal it with tape, and place it in a freezer for 30 minutes (this will kill the specimen). Do not crush the bug or the bag.
2. In order to facilitate timely and accurate identification, please be sure to follow these important guidelines:
  - Never send live specimens.
  - Never send broken or crushed specimens.
  - Never send insects loose in an envelope.
  - Never send specimens without a completed submission form (see below).
3. Complete the *Bed Bug Identification Submission Form* on page 4, and mail it with the specimen to:

NYC Department of Education  
Pest Management Unit  
P.O Box 1697  
Long Island City, N.Y. 11101

**Do not email images of the specimen if you have already mailed the specimen itself.**

### Submitting digital images of the specimen by email

1. You may photograph either live or dead insects. Do not photograph moving insects as doing so will create blurred details. Active specimens can be slowed down by placing them in a freezer for a few minutes before taking pictures.
2. The images must be focused, sharp and detailed. Most digital cameras have limited ability to reproduce clear close-up images of small subjects, though if yours has a "Macro" setting, use it to take a close-up photograph. Use judgment on specimens and your camera's photography capabilities. If the images are blurry or lack sufficient quality, we may not be able to identify the specimen.

3. Submit at least three images of varying angles, including an image of the top/head of the insect, which is the most important angle for bed bug identification.
4. Email the images with a copy of the *Bed Bug Identification Submission Form* on page 4 to [bedbugconcerns@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:bedbugconcerns@schools.nyc.gov). We will not be able to provide you with the results of the specimen identification in a timely manner unless you include all of the information on the *Bed Bug Identification Submission Form* in your email.
  - Do not email images of the suspected bug if you have already mailed the specimen to us.
5. If we cannot identify the specimen using the photographs you send, you may be asked to mail the original specimen to us. Please save the original specimen until you receive the results of the identification, but do not send us the original specimen unless requested to do so.

### **Bug Identification and Next Steps**

1. Once the Department of Education’s Pest Management Unit receives either the physical specimen or images of the pest, it will examine and identify the specimen. The Unit will notify the principal via email with the results of the examination. If the specimen is not a bed bug, there is no need for further action.
2. If a specimen is confirmed to be a bed bug, a DOE Pest Management Professional will contact the principal to schedule a time and date for inspection and remediation. Inspections and remediation will take place after 3:00 p.m. The Pest Management Professional will inspect the room or rooms where the specimen was captured, and vacuum the room(s) with a HEPA vacuum. Please see *School Preparation Prior to Treatment* on page 5 for information on preparing for inspection and remediation.
3. If the Pest Management Professional observes an infestation in the school, the Pest Management Unit will notify the school principal and schedule treatment, as well as additional inspections of rooms adjacent to the room with the infestation. Parents/guardians of students in the entire building must be notified if there is an infestation. (Effective July 1, 2011, this will also be New York State Law.) The Pest Management Unit will provide the principal with notification materials to send to parents and staff.
  - According to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, an *infestation* is identified by bed bug reproduction in a given area. During the inspection, the DOE Pest Management Professional will look for bed bugs in various life stages (egg, nymph, adult). A school is infested only if there are signs of bedbug reproduction. A confirmed bed bug does not mean that the school is infested.

Please review the rest of this Kit for the *Bed Bug Identification Submission Form*, instructions on preparing for an inspection, tips to help minimize bed bugs in schools, an FAQ, and additional resources, including links to additional information from the NYC Health Department and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**BED BUG IDENTIFICATION SUBMISSION FORM**

On enter date here, a presumed bed bug was found (choose one):

- On a person
- On a person’s belongings
- On furniture/wall within a room

- Room Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- School number (e.g., PS 80): \_\_\_\_\_
- School Building Code (see Custodian for assistance): \_\_\_\_\_
- School Address: \_\_\_\_\_
- Borough of School: \_\_\_\_\_
- School Geographical District: \_\_\_\_\_
- School Principal (Name): \_\_\_\_\_
- School Principal Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_
- School Principal e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_
- Custodian’s Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_
- Custodian’s e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional comments:**

Please complete this form and submit it *either* with the specimen by mail to:

NYC Department of Education  
 Pest Management Unit  
 PO Box 1697  
 Long Island City, NY 11101

*Or* via email with images of the suspected bed bug to [bedbugconcerns@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:bedbugconcerns@schools.nyc.gov).

**Please do not submit a specimen by both mail and email. Do not submit any live specimen.**

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

**SCHOOL PREPARATION PRIOR TO INSPECTION AND/OR TREATMENT**

If the DOE Pest Management Unit has identified a bed bug from your school, please prepare for inspection and remediation by taking the following steps:

- Carpets within affected classrooms and offices should be vacuumed and loosened at their borders.
- All items attached to walls should be removed, placed in sealed plastic liners, and left in the room for further inspection.
- Pets should remain in the room.
- Closets should be cleaned out and kept in good order going forward.
- The floors of the classroom and the cracks and crevices of the closets should be vacuumed. The dust and debris from the vacuum should be immediately placed into a plastic liner and discarded on the exterior of the building. The vacuum cleaner should be inspected and confirmed to be free of bed bugs.
- Please note that if items are being discarded, they should be placed in a plastic bag and immediately brought to the exterior of the building to be discarded.

*If you have additional questions prior to your school's inspection, please contact the DOE Pest Management Unit at [IPM@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:IPM@schools.nyc.gov).*

**HELPFUL TIPS TO MINIMIZE BED BUGS IN SCHOOLS**

- Reduce the amount of clutter in classrooms and closets.
- Use protective cover cases on mattresses in schools that have mattresses (life centers, nurseries).
- Reduce the number of rugs or possibly replace area rugs with plastic chairs.
- Place library books in plastic liners when returned and inspect them before putting them back on the shelves.
- Remove curtains and wall frames, if applicable.
- Repair peeling wall paper and paint.
- Use a vacuum with a crevice tool to suction in small spaces and cracks. If bed bugs are suspected, place contents in plastic bag, seal and discard outside of the building.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **If a bed bug is found on a child, should I isolate the child or send him/her home?**

No. Bed bugs are not known to cause or transmit disease and the risk of person-to-person transference in school is very low. No child should be isolated or removed from a classroom setting. It is important to remember that bed bugs can resemble other insects and that many bed bugs submitted for identification are not, in fact, bed bugs.

### **If we see or capture a suspected bed bug in a classroom, should we close the room until a Pest Management Professional inspects it?**

No. If it is a bed bug, it is likely that it was unknowingly brought into the school by someone who encountered it in another place. If you have captured it, you may have already eliminated the problem. Additionally, many suspected bed bugs are not bed bugs at all. You should send the captured specimen to the DOE Pest Management Unit for identification, following the protocol described in the beginning of this kit.

### **If the DOE Pest Management Unit has identified a bed bug from our school, what area(s) of the school will be treated?**

The DOE Pest Management Professional will inspect and, if necessary, treat the room in which the specimen was captured. In most cases, a thorough inspection and vacuuming of the room with a HEPA vacuum by the Pest Management Unit Professional is the best treatment when there is not an infestation.

If the Pest Management Professional determines that there is an infestation (bed bugs living and reproducing in the room), the rooms above, below and adjacent to the infested room will be inspected and treated as necessary.

### **If the DOE Pest Management Unit confirms that a specimen found in my school is a bed bug, should parents and staff be notified?**

Parents/guardians of students in the entire building must be notified if there is an infestation. (Effective July 1, 2011, this will also be New York State Law.) According to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, an *infestation* is identified by bed bug reproduction in a given area. A single confirmed bed bug does not constitute an infestation. A DOE Pest Management Professional must inspect the school and determine whether there is an infestation. Schools are not a friendly environment for bed bugs and the chance of an infestation is low. If it is determined that your school is infested, the Pest Management Unit will provide notification materials to share with parents and building staff.

If the principal would like to notify parents or staff that DOE Pest Management has confirmed that a bed bug was found in the school (not an infestation), please use the sample letter on page 10 of this kit, which contains important information about bed bugs. Translations are available [here](#). We recommend including the Health Department's bed bug fact sheet with the letter; the fact sheet is available [online](#).

**We have captured samples of bed bugs in several rooms over the past few months; is the building infested?**

According to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, an infestation is identified by bed bug reproduction in a given area. An infestation can only be determined after an inspection is conducted by a DOE Pest Management Professional. Bed bugs are generally hitch-hikers and may be brought into the building repeatedly by anyone, including by those with bed bugs in their homes that are not being addressed.

**What can we do at the school level to help reduce the risk of bed bugs?**

Learn to identify the signs of bed bugs (visit the [Health Department's website](#) or call 311 for additional information). Frequently inspect your rooms; if you see signs of bed bugs, report them immediately. If you capture a suspected specimen, submit it to the DOE Pest Management Unit following the procedures outlined in the beginning of this kit. Check your furniture frequently for bed bugs, especially chairs and couches. Get rid of clutter to reduce places in which bed bugs can hide and discard anything that is not being used. Seal cracks and crevices, and vacuum periodically. Consider removing rugs.

Encourage school staff and parents to learn to identify the signs of bed bugs, in school and in their own homes, by visiting the Health Department's [website](#) or calling 311.

**What recommendations can we provide to parents to minimize or reduce the risk of bed bugs being transported into the home?**

Encourage parents to learn to identify the signs of bed bugs and share the Health Department's *Stop Bed Bugs Safely* fact sheet and the *Preventing and Getting Rid of Bed Bugs Safely* brochure with them (both available [online](#)). Parents can inspect backpacks and personal belongings when their child returns home. They can place the child's clothing in a dryer for 40 minutes as a precaution (high heat kills bed bugs) or store clothing in a plastic bag prior to washing. They can also call 311 for more information.

*If you have additional questions, please contact the DOE Pest Management Unit at [IPM@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:IPM@schools.nyc.gov).*



**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

For more information about bed bugs, please use the following resources:

- NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene bed bug website:  
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/vector/vector-faq1.shtml>
  - *Preventing and Getting Rid of Bed Bugs Safely* brochure
  - *Stop Bed Bugs Safely* fact sheet
- Bed bug information from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):  
<http://www.epa.gov/bedbugs/>
- Office of School Health website: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Health/default.htm>
- Call 311

*Note: Parents/guardians of students in the entire building must be notified if there is an infestation. (Effective July 1, 2011, this will also be New York State Law.) An infestation is defined as bed bugs reproducing in a given area. If there is a school infestation, the DOE Pest Management Unit will provide the principal with notification materials.*

*While a confirmed bed bug does not mean that the school is infested, some principals may wish to notify parents and/or staff that the DOE Pest Management Unit has confirmed a bed bug from the school. In these cases, please use the sample letter below, which contains important information from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Translations are available [here](#).*

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**SAMPLE LETTER**  
*On School Letterhead*

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We recently found a confirmed bed bug in your child’s school. Bed bugs are a nuisance, but they are not known to cause or spread disease. They are usually active at night when they feed on blood. The bite is initially painless, but it may become swollen and itch, much like a mosquito bite. If you have concerns for you or your child, you should call your doctor.

The source of bed bugs often cannot be determined, as they may be found in many places, including hotels, airplanes, buses, hospitals, department stores and movie theaters. Finding a bed bug does not mean that our school building is infested. Bed bugs are often unknowingly brought into the school by building occupants and as a result we may have future sightings.

Even though it is unlikely for bed bugs to reproduce and spread in schools, the Department of Education will continue to work to identify pests, provide thorough inspections of schools and have licensed pest control specialists treat rooms as appropriate.

If you have experienced them in your home, we strongly recommend seeking professional assistance from a qualified pest control company.

For further assistance on preventing bed bugs, please see:

- NYC Department of Health’s “Preventing and Getting Rid of Bed Bugs Safely” brochure: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/vector/bed-bug-guide.pdf>
- NYC Department of Health’s Vector Surveillance and Control bed bug website: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/vector/vector-faq1.shtml>
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) bed bug information website: <http://www.epa.gov/bedbugs/>

If you have any questions regarding bed bugs, please call 311 for additional help.

Sincerely,  
Principal