

Toronto EMS Bed Bug Identification Guide

In the past ten years bed bugs have become a serious pest in North America. Bed Bugs live in the home, especially in and around the bed, and usually bite at night when people are sleeping. They will feed at any time of day if necessary.

Adult bed bugs are on average 5 mm long, oval-shaped and dorso-ventrally flattened. Adults are brachypterous; the hindwings are nearly absent and the forewings are reduced to small, leathery pads. Nymphs look like smaller, paler versions of the adults.

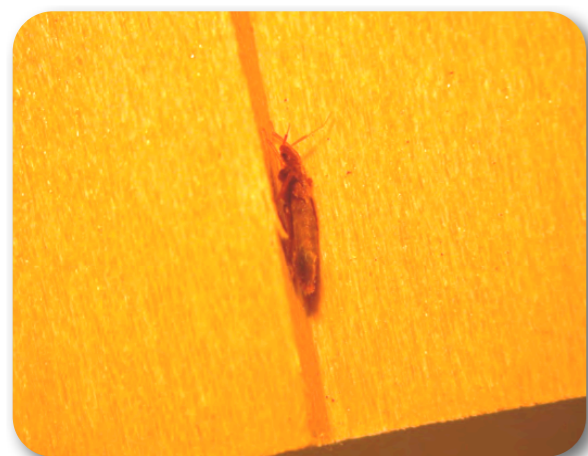


Bed bugs are small but visible insects. There are three main life stages:

1. Larvae/whitish egg (about 1 mm in length),
2. Five pale juvenile (nymph) stages that range from 1mm to 4.5 mm (1/4 inch)
3. Adult stage, which can be as long as 7 or 8 mm (3/8 inch) when fed. The newly hatched nymph is very pale until it feeds. Then it looks like a tiny droplet of blood. Each nymph stage will feed and become filled with red blood. The adult is about the size and shape of an apple seed, and dark red to brown in color and as flat as a credit card before feeding.



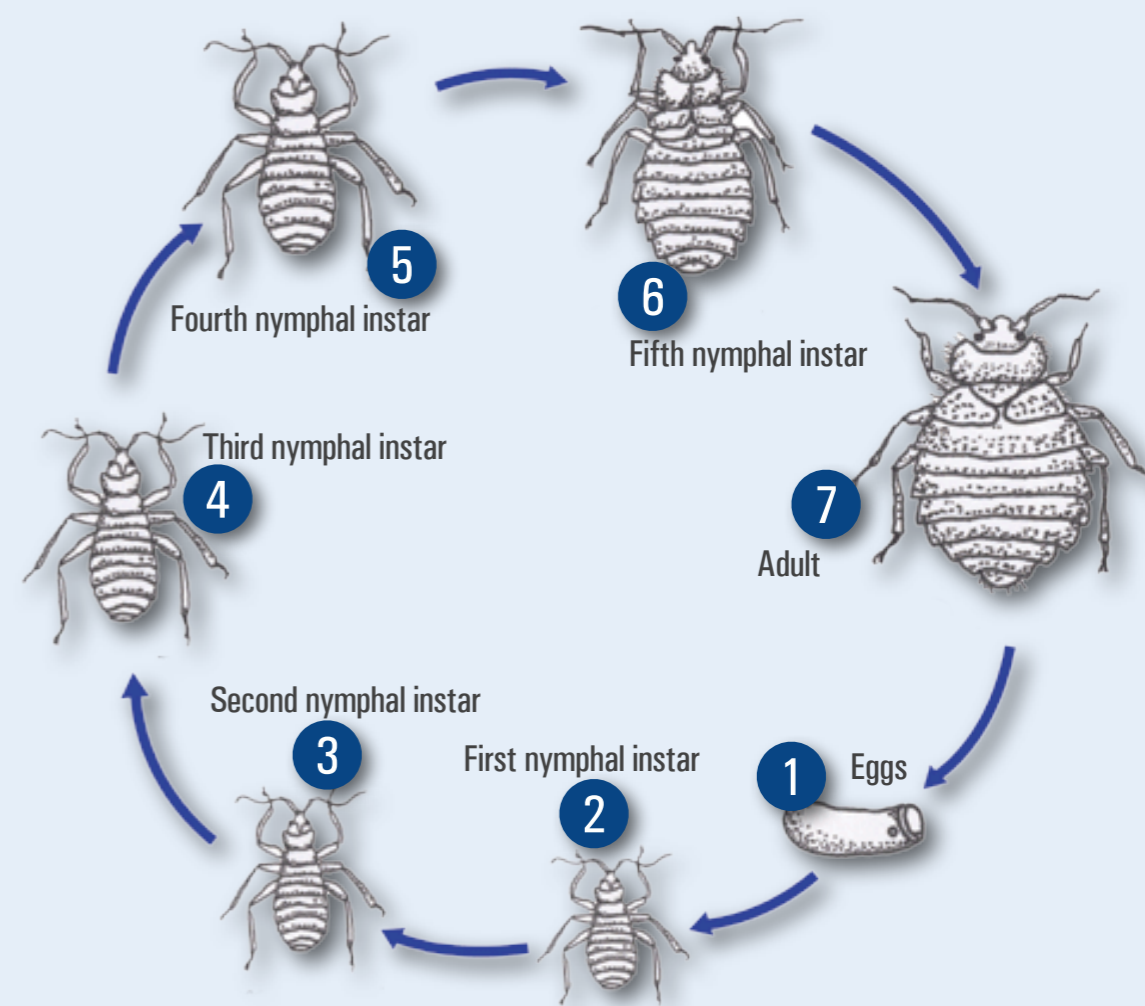
Photo by P. Stravino



Adult bed bugs are very flat and fit into crevices as thin as a credit card before they feed. Once fed, they are longer and plump until they begin to digest the blood meal.



Bed bugs, cast skins, fecal stains and eggs in the wood structure of a box spring. Adult bed bugs are very flat and fit into crevices



Fast Facts about Bed Bugs

Bed bugs:

- Do not transmit diseases to people.
- Cannot fly or jump, but can crawl quickly.
- Are large enough to be seen.
- Are attracted to body heat and carbon dioxide emissions from humans.

Bed bugs have not been shown to vector diseases. Currently there is no evidence that bed bugs transmit blood-borne infectious diseases such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV. It has been determined that these viruses do not replicate inside the insect's body, and animal model studies have never been able to demonstrate insect-to-animal transmission.

References:

- Toronto Public Health, <http://www.toronto.ca/health/bedbugs/>;
CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/bedbugs/index.html>;
Cornell University, http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/publications/bb_guidelines/ (New York State Integrated Pest Management)