

16 Secrets Bed Bugs Don't Want You to Know—But Are Crucial for Keeping Them at Bay by Karyn Repinski

We may be tiny buggers (about the shape and size of an apple seed), but our presence elicits a massive case of the heebie jeebies. Read on to find out what you need to know to sleep tight and be sure we don't bite.

As a recent [study](#) in the *Journal of Medical Entomology* showed, we really like dark red and black (so maybe don't choose bedding in those colors) and tend to stay away from white, green, and yellow. Researchers think these colors offer good protection from predators like ants and spiders. And since we have a red exoskeleton, it's likely that we're drawn to this color because it suggests the presence of other bed bugs—and we generally like to stick together to stay safe. Keep an eye out for these [8 warning signs you're about to have a bed bug problem](#).

Exterminators treat rooms and furniture with a combination of dry steam cleaning, deep heat, and chemical treatments. If your clothes have been in an infested room (or your sheets on buggy bed), throw them in a hot dryer (at least 120 degrees) for 30 minutes to kill bed bugs; washing in hot water alone won't do the trick. Don't miss these [secrets from professional exterminators](#) about bed bugs and other pests.

As the pros at Orkin [know](#), we depend on blood as our food source. In order to mature into adults, we must feed once during each of our immature stages. Adult females also need blood in order to produce eggs, which are the size of a speck of dust. We're equipped with elongated beaks that we use to pierce the skin and extract blood. Finding the right blood vessel may take more than one nibble into the skin though, so we usually make more than one bite—that's why the number of bites you receive isn't indicative of the number of bed bugs that have fed on you. This is [how you can prevent and destroy bed bugs](#).

We like to feed on sources that are still—hence our attraction to areas around where people sleep, be it in an apartment, house, hotel, dorm room, or on a cruise ship, bus, or train. In fact, if a sleeping person moves while we're feeding, we'll probably withdraw our beak and search for a blood meal on another part of their body. This is [what bed bugs look like](#) so you can easily identify them.

We'll nibble on any part of the body that's exposed while you sleep, including the hands, neck, face, shoulders, legs, and arms. If it's mosquitos that have been keeping you up, don't miss these [five ways to prevent mosquito bites while you sleep](#).

It takes us three to 12 minutes to become engorged, and after feeding we normally go to a secluded location to digest our meal. Often times we'll void remains of earlier blood meals while still feeding, which is why you might find rusty or tarry spots on your sheets. We know—we're the worst house guests! These [foods help relieve bug bites](#) from bed bugs and other pests.

We'll feed on other mammals (like the family dog or cat) and birds as well. Our bites aren't painful, so our hosts are unaware that we're feeding on them.

Our bodies are slim and flat (about the width of a credit card), so when we're not feeding, we can squeeze into really small spots. Some of our favorite hiding spots are the seams of mattresses, box springs, bed frames, headboards, dresser tables, inside cracks or crevices, and behind loose wallpaper and wall hangings. We can live several months without a blood meal (a whole year if conditions are cool), so we can chill there for a long time too.