

## **MILTON BOARD OF HEALTH**

### **FACT SHEET: BED BUG ADVISORY**

- **Bed Bug Facts:**

Bed bugs are insects that are small (1/4" to 3/8"), wingless, oval in shape and usually red or mahogany in color. They feed on the blood of humans, other mammals and birds. Bed bugs are not known to transmit human infection, although they can cause swelling and itching on the skin after feeding. Bed bugs can survive without feeding for long periods of time – typically 80 to 140 days. However, some adult bed bugs have been known to survive up to 550 days without food. A bed bug's lifespan is about 10 months and there can be up to 3 or 4 generations of bed bugs per year.

- **Bed Bug Transportation:**

One way that bed bugs are spread is through other mammals or birds found near the home such as mice, rats, rabbits and birds. Bed bugs can also be found in theaters, hotels, restrooms, buses or trains. Bed bugs may be accidentally transported by clothing, luggage, bedding and second-hand or rental furniture.

- **Bed Bug Living Environment:**

Bed bugs often live in human bedding during the day and feed on the bed's occupant at night. In the early stages of infestation, bed bugs are found in the tufts, seams, buttons and folds of mattresses and daybed covers. As the infestation progresses, they can be found in cracks and crevices in bed frames. If they multiply, you can find bed bugs in baseboards, window and door casings, pictures and picture moldings, furniture, loosened wallpaper, cracks in plaster and partitions, couches and stuffed chairs. You can often identify their hiding places by black or brown dried fecal spots or egg cases. Sometimes a strong sweet odor can be detected in rooms with a large number of bed bugs.

- **Treatment of Bed Bug Bites:** Do not scratch the bites as they will become more irritated and inflamed. Wash the bites off with antibacterial soap to reduce the risk of infection. If there is severe swelling, apply an ice pack to the site. See a health care provider if an infection develops at the site of the bite.

- **How to Reduce Infestation:**

First, clean the infested room thoroughly with hot water. If bedding, linens or curtains are affected, wash and dry these on the highest temperature setting to kill the bed bugs. You should brush, vacuum and steam clean infested mattresses and pillows. You can also purchase an over the counter pesticide that is specifically labeled for bedding control. Apply the spray to all cracks and crevices on the floor, bed frame, baseboards, carpets and any other areas where bed bugs have been located. Take care that you do not over spray and follow all directions and guidelines listed on the pesticide label. If these measures do not get rid of the bed bugs, you can call a professional exterminator.

- **How to Prevent Future Bed Bugs:**

Indirect prevention measures include keeping birds, bats and rodents away from your home. You can also prevent bed bugs from getting into your home by repairing cracks in the walls, and caulking windows and doors. Regularly cleaning bedding and mattress pads and steam cleaning mattresses can go a long way in preventing infestation. Ways to directly prevent bed bugs from infesting your bed include standing the legs of the bed in soapy water, coating the legs in petroleum jelly or double sided sticky tape. Since bed bugs cannot fly and have trouble climbing vertical surfaces, you can place bed legs in glass or metal containers such as cans or jars.

- **Health Department Recommendations:**

Rental occupants should do the above procedures to try to rid their home of the bed bugs. If a professional exterminator is needed, request such by the owner or property manager. The Board of Health can only cite for insects when evidence is observable. Please call the Milton Board of Health if you need any more information or to register a complaint at 617-898-4886.