

BedBug Awareness

How to Identify Bedbugs and Tell When The Bugs Are Biting You

By: R. Renée Bembry

Identifying bedbug bites may not be easy at first because these little hemipterous pests from the Cimicidae family tend to bite when their victims are asleep. Moreover, hours and sometimes days may pass before itching or other signs of bedbug bites occur. In furtherance, some people have little or no reaction to bedbug bites and thus may never even know they have been bitten.

Bedbugs are completely unlike other insects when it comes to sucking blood from their prey. Whereas bites from other bloodsucking insects such as fleas and mosquitoes are noticeable almost immediately upon impact because their mouthparts can be felt penetrating the skin and causing itches, bedbugs shield their stings with a *numbing potion*. In addition, since bedbugs tend to bite while their victims are sleeping, their tiny lightweight bodies go unnoticed when crawling up arms, legs, and other body parts, whereas other types of bloodsucking pests that often bite while their victims are awake may be felt crawling or landing on the skin. Even further still, bedbugs are quiet. They do not alert their prey the way insects such as mosquitoes do by giving forth buzzing sounds.

What this means is that since bedbugs bite when their hosts are asleep and long periods (hours and even days) pass before

bite wounds are noticed, identifying bedbug bites becomes more difficult because most victims do not notice signs of biting until they are awake and moving about. This causes humans to *disassociate the actual time of biting occurrence*. They are left incapable of associating bite irritations felt throughout the day with wounds incurred while sleeping. For this reason, most people are likely to think some other type of insect must have bitten them when their skin begins to itch.

With that said, it must be stressed that these parasites do not affect all their victims in the same way. Reactions to their bites differ in varying degrees. So much so that while some people may not ever know they were bitten and bites may take hours or days to appear on others, the more sensitive group will show signs of bedbug biting as soon as they awaken.

Knowing how to identify bedbug bites can help you in knowing how to react to their presence. Identifying bedbug bites should also alert you that either you have a bedbug problem in your home or some place you slept is/was infested.

Bedbug bites, when noticeable, can appear in different forms. For examples, they could surface as tiny bumps that look similar to *puss-less* pimples. Wounds of this sort are extremely mild compared to those appearing as raised red welts. Wounds that look like raised welts can have *puss-filled* bumps in their centers. They can also look like donuts or rings on the body. When welts are present, they may span as much as an inch and a half to two inches across the affected area of the skin. Bedbug bites may also appear oval shaped and they can be hard beneath the skin. The worse thing about bedbug bites, however, is the fact that they can drive you crazy with their itching!

Bedbug bites can last anywhere from a few days to a month or more. Persons whose bodies respond with the most sensitive allergic reactions to bedbug bites are usually reacting to agents found in bedbug saliva. Bedbugs secrete these agents

while sucking blood in order to prevent victims from knowing something is happening to them and to keep blood from clotting while they drink their victims' blood.

Assuring their bites are painless by inserting their numbing agent, an anesthetic, into the host's skin allows bedbugs to suck blood until they drink their fill. Preventing victims from knowing what is going on prevents the unsuspected from knocking bedbugs from their body and from killing the pests as well.

Another way to identify bedbug bites is by linear patterns they often leave on their victims. This method is helpful, however, it is not full proof because when several bedbugs bite one victim simultaneously, they may move all over the person's body leaving spotty patches all over the skin.

If you suspect bedbugs have bitten you, the best thing to do is to make certain of your suspicion by investigating your sleeping area. Bedbugs hide in mattress folds, mattress frames, dressers, closets, cracks and molding to name a few. Any and all cracks and crevices in walls and furniture make excellent homes for these parasites. They hide during the day so searching for them may be the only way to find out if they are present in your sleeping area or any other place in your home.

If you find small oval sized brownish bugs in any of these places, they are probably bedbugs. If you see dark patchy spots or stains in any of these areas, you may have discovered bedbug droppings. This evidence suggests bedbugs are present or at least they have been. Treating bedbug infestations is the only way to get rid of the critters and to keep them from biting you or anyone else again!