

## **Bed Bug Fact Sheet for Condominium and Cooperative Buildings**

### **Why is this fact sheet being provided to me?**

In 2013, the City of Chicago passed an ordinance to help address the growing problem of bed bugs. This ordinance requires that your governing association prepare a plan for managing bed bug infestations. As part of this plan, your governing association is providing you with this fact sheet.

### **What are bed bugs?**

Bed bugs are small, flat, wingless insects. They feed on blood and can be a nuisance for individuals. They are named for their tendency to live on mattresses or other parts of a bed.

Bed bugs can be found in homes, condominium and cooperative buildings, apartments, hotels, schools, dormitories, shelters, offices and many other places. Unlike some other types of insects, dirty living conditions do not attract bed bugs.

### **What do bed bugs look like?**

Adult bed bugs are roughly the size, shape and color of an apple seed: 1/4 of an inch in length and light or reddish-brown in color. Immature forms of bed bugs are smaller and lighter in color. Eggs are tiny and white. You should be able to see the adult form with your naked eye, but may need a magnifying glass to see the immature forms or eggs. Bed bugs can be easily confused with other small insects. The website listed at the end of this fact sheet has a number of pictures of bed bugs that can be useful for identification purposes.

### **Where do bed bugs live?**

Bed bugs can be found anywhere people sleep, sit or lay down. They can be found on mattresses and box springs, especially near the piping, seams and tags, and in cracks and crevices of head boards and bed frames. They can also be found in other furniture, especially in the seams and zippers of chairs and couches, in the folds of curtains, in drawer joints, in electrical outlets, in baseboards, behind picture frames and in other tight spaces.

### **How can bed bugs get into my unit?**

Bed bugs can get into a unit by hitching a ride on mattresses or other bedding, furniture, clothing and baggage. Once in a unit they can crawl from one room to another, or get into an adjacent unit by crawling through small cracks or holes in walls or ceilings or under doors. Because bed bugs do not have wings, they cannot fly into or around your unit.

### **What can I do to prevent bed bugs from getting into my unit?**

Bed bugs can be found most anywhere, so always be aware of your surroundings. Always check furniture and bedding, especially those bought secondhand, for signs of bed bugs before you buy

them. Never bring items that someone else has disposed of into your unit, as these items may be infested with bed bugs. When traveling within or outside the U.S., always inspect the bed and furniture, keep suitcases off the floor and the bed and inspect them before you leave. When returning home from travel, always inspect your luggage carefully for signs of bed bugs before you bring the luggage into your building.

### **What else can I do to prevent a bed bug infestation?**

Reduce clutter, especially in bedrooms. Seal cracks and crevices with caulk. Store unused items in sealed containers or plastic bags. Wash and dry bedding often. Check beds and furniture for signs of bed bugs. Purchase mattress and box spring covers.

### **Do bed bugs transmit disease?**

No, bed bugs are not known to transmit disease.

### **Are there other health concerns related to bed bugs?**

Yes. Their bites, like those of other insects, may cause an allergic reaction with swelling, redness and itching. Their presence may cause people to be anxious and lose sleep.

### **How do I know if I have a bed bug infestation in my unit?**

Though bites may be an indicator of a bed bug infestation, they are generally a poor one as not all people will react to bed bug bites or the bites may be due to other reasons. The best indication of an infestation is to look for physical signs of bed bugs such as live or dead bed bugs, eggs or eggshells or tiny dark spots or reddish stains on mattresses or other places where bed bugs live.

### **What should I do if I suspect there are bed bugs in my unit?**

Under this ordinance, owners of a unit must immediately call the governing association then follow-up in writing. Owners should not try to get rid of the bed bugs by applying chemicals, “bug bombs” or pesticides as these do not work and could make you, your family or neighbors sick. Once you have notified the governing association, wait for additional instructions from them.

### **What will happen once I notify the governing association?**

Your governing association will want to confirm the presence of bed bugs in your unit. They may do so by gathering additional information from you, or by asking to be allowed entrance into your unit to conduct an inspection. They may also call a pest control company to do this inspection. If bed bugs are identified, the governing association should hire a pest control company to treat the problem. Prior to any treatment, the pest control company should inform you of the steps you need to take to prepare your unit.

### **Should I dispose of bedding, clothing or other materials that may be infested?**

Disposing of these items is probably not necessary unless directed by a pest control company. If there are items that do need to be disposed of, do so carefully by sealing them in plastic bags so as to not spread bed bugs further. The ordinance prohibits the recycling of any bed bug infested materials and requires that any bed bug infested materials be totally enclosed in a plastic bag and labeled as being infested with bed bugs when disposed.

### **What should I do with any linens or clothes that may be infested?**

- Wash all linen and other infested materials (including clothing) in hot water, then after drying the clothes, keep them in the dryer and dry for an additional 20 minutes on the highest setting.
- Put un-washable or “dry clean only” materials in the dryer on the highest setting for at least 20 minutes.
- If you have to launder in a common area of the building or at a laundromat, make sure all items are enclosed in a bag before leaving your unit to prevent the further spread of bed bugs.
- Once all these materials are laundered and dried, seal them in clean bags so bed bugs can't re-infest them.

### **As a unit owner, what am I required to do under the ordinance?**

As a unit owner, you are required to notify the governing association of any known or suspected bed bug problem within your unit. You are also required to cooperate with the governing association in managing the problem.

### **Are there any penalties for not complying with the ordinance?**

The ordinance allows the city to issue fines to unit owners for not complying with these requirements. Fines can go as high as \$2,000 for a third offense.

### **Are there other requirements I should know about if I lease my unit to someone?**

Yes. If you lease your unit, you and your tenant are requirement to comply with a number of other requirements specific to landlords and tenants. These additional requirements are described in a brochure entitled *Preventing Bed Bug Infestations in Apartments*, which is available at the link below.

### **Where can I get additional information?**

Additional information can be found at [www.cityofchicago.org/health](http://www.cityofchicago.org/health)