

NOTIFICATION

Bugs are common occurrences in public places in our community. While they can be challenging to eliminate, most bugs are more of a nuisance than a public health hazard. We would like to share information from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) regarding bugs commonly found in public places.

Fleas

Adult fleas are approximately 1/8-inch long, dark reddish-brown, wingless, hard-bodied insects. Fleas typically live on household pets and can cause discomfort for the animal. They can move from one living source to another. They depend on warmth and a food source for continued growth and reproduction.

The following tips may help to prevent, reduce, or eliminate flea infestations:

- Vacuum every day to remove eggs, larvae and adults; this is the best method for initial control of a flea infestation.
- Be sure to vacuum the following areas: carpets, cushioned furniture, cracks and crevices on floors, along baseboards, and the basement.
- Steam clean carpets: the hot steam and soap can kill fleas in all stages of the life cycle.
- Pay particular attention to areas where pets sleep.
- Wash all pet bedding and family bedding on which pets lie in hot, soapy water every two to three weeks.
- If an infestation is severe, discard old pet bedding and replace it with fresh, clean material.
- Use a flea comb to suppress adult fleas. Hair can pass through the comb's teeth, but not the fleas, removing fleas as well as flea feces and dried blood.
- Especially comb the neck and tail areas, which is where the most fleas congregate.
- Deposit fleas in hot, soapy water to kill them.
- Consider allowing your pets to stay indoors as much as possible, which reduces their chance of being bitten by ticks and fleas.

Head Lice

Head lice are tiny parasites that attach to human head hair and feed on blood through the skin. Eggs live attached to hair on the scalp. They appear yellow but are generally too small to see. Eggs transition into nymphs after about one week and then feed every few hours. The body of the nymph turns dark red after feeding. Nymphs survive for eight to nine days and then transition into adults, which can live for one month. Head lice cannot fly, but they can crawl into sweaters, towels, hair accessories, and blankets, which is generally how transmission occurs.

If head lice is discovered on a person there are shampoo treatments available at local retail stores. The directions need to be followed because lice treatments must be reported in 7-10 days after initial treatment. Recently worn clothes and used bed linens should be washed in hot water (120-140°F). Remember to include hats, scarves, gloves, mittens, and hair accessories. Items that cannot be washed or dry-cleaned should be sealed in a bag for 10 days. Clean combs and brushes by soaking them in hot water (130°F) soapy water, or lice control product solution for 10 minutes, then scrub with a brush such as an old toothbrush. All household members should be monitored but only treated if head lice is present. Parents may also choose to contact their primary care physician for additional assistance.

Bed Bugs

Bed bugs, like fleas and lice, feed off blood; yet, unlike many other pests, they are not known to transmit or spread disease. Their bites can become itchy welts but are typically painless. Bites are mostly on exposed skin during sleep, like the face, neck, arms, shoulders, and hands. Challenges to dealing with bed bugs include the perception that they are found only in dirty places or that one bug means an infestation. Bed bugs can be brought into classrooms on belongings and can be found in many places, including but not limited to hotels, planes, and movie theaters. During the day, bed bugs hide in crevices of bedding, mattress seams, and bed frames.

If a bed bug is found in the school, an inspection of the area where the bed bug was found needs to be completed immediately. The school also needs to take action. This may include a cleaning regiment and contacting an exterminating company and the local health department. Fremont City Schools completes a cleaning regiment that is recommended by our exterminating company, including a long-term monitoring program. School officials also isolate the belongings that contain the bug(s) to prevent any possible spread.

Before and after school, parents should inspect their child's belongings for bed bugs and may want to have a professional inspect their home. Parents can also wash their child's linens and clothing in hot water (120-140°F), or put them in a black trash bag and leave them in the sun for a day. Additional suggestions include removing clutter and vacuuming to remove some of the bugs (then remove the vacuum bag to a sealed plastic bag and dispose outside immediately). Parents may also choose to contact the local health department for further assistance.

Bed Bug Myths

Myth: You can't see a bed bug.

Reality: You should be able to see adult bed bugs, nymphs and eggs with your naked eye.

Myth: Bed bugs live in dirty places.

Reality: Bed bugs are not attracted to dirt and grime; they are attracted to warmth, blood and carbon dioxide. However, clutter offers more hiding spots.

Myth: Bed bugs transmit diseases.

Reality: There have been no cases or studies that indicate bed bugs transmit diseases between humans.

For additional information on any of the above topics, please contact your building principal or school nurse or log on to: www.epa.gov or www.odh.ohio.gov.