

## Managing Bed Bugs in Healthcare Facilities

Bed bugs are an unfortunate reality in many U.S. healthcare facilities. They exist in all 50 states, and their increasing numbers may be a result of more international travel, more regulatory restrictions on insecticides, and more tolerance to newer organic compounds used to treat bed bugs.<sup>1</sup>

Healthcare facilities need to eliminate any bed bug infestations as well as treat affected patients for bites and assess them for possible mental health consequences.<sup>2</sup> Bed bug bites may be hard to diagnose because they are similar to other insect bites. Fortunately, they do not spread disease, but they may leave welts and cause itching, and sometimes scratching can lead to secondary skin infections.<sup>3</sup> Some patients also may experience emotional distress, anxiety, or sleeplessness as a result of the stigma of bed bugs, so healthcare providers need to educate patients about bed bugs in a calm and professional manner.<sup>4</sup>

To deal with this public health pest, healthcare facilities should have a written protocol for managing bed bug infestations; provide thorough training to all staff members on bed bug identification, surveillance, control, and prevention; develop policies for communicating with patients and visitors and educating them about bed bugs; and retain the services of a licensed pest management company.<sup>5</sup>

This checklist provides high-level considerations that healthcare facilities can use to assess and refine their efforts to identify and eliminate bed bug infestations.<sup>6</sup>

	Yes	No
<i>Proactive Measures</i>		
Is bed bug monitoring part of regular housekeeping/cleaning routines?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the facility engage in inactive monitoring practices, such as using glue boards or other traps in areas likely to have bed bug activity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
<b>Proactive Measures (continued)</b>		
Does the facility engage in active monitoring practices, such as heat, carbon dioxide, chemical lures, or any combination of these items?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prior to installing bedding or furniture in the facility, do staff members inspect it for bed bugs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff members inspect patients' personal belongings for bed bugs before placing them in patients' rooms?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the facility conduct quarterly thorough inspections of potential infestation locations, including waiting rooms and lobbies, emergency department areas, patient rooms and maternity suites, staff storage and lounge areas, and patient intake areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the facility require a bed bug inspection of equipment brought in by healthcare providers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the facility periodically conduct canine inspections of various areas to check for bed bugs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
As part of patient intake, do staff members examine patients for any bites, ask about unexplained bite marks, and ask about any bed bugs at the patient's home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Staff Training</b>		
Are all staff members thoroughly trained on bed bug identification, surveillance, control, and prevention upon hire as well as annually?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does staff training cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of bed bugs and an explanation of their life cycle?</li> <li>• Signs and symptoms of bed bugs, including bites; blood spots/smears on linens, mattresses, walls, and ceilings; dark spots/fecal stains on linens, walls, corners, and ceilings; and shed skins?</li> <li>• Possible bed bug locations, including mattresses, box springs, bedframes, headboards, baseboards around bedding and nightstands, nightstands and dressers, sofas and chairs, closets, wall and ceiling corners, and durable medical equipment?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
<b>Staff Training (continued)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspection procedures?</li> <li>• Housekeeping and maintenance procedures, including vacuuming and appropriate trash disposal?</li> <li>• Procedures for reporting and taking action after detection of bed bugs or evidence of an infestation?</li> <li>• Prevention and control measures to reduce bed bugs and limit their spread?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Detection</b>		
Are staff members directed to immediately report any suspicion or evidence of bed bug infestation to the designated authority for the facility?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are staff members directed to capture and secure any bed bugs in a vial or specimen container for identification?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do all staff members (including facility maintenance workers) know to never remove any items from infested rooms before a pest management professional inspects and treats them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are infested rooms quarantined (linen and equipment remain) while awaiting inspection and treatment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If a pest management professional verifies that live bed bugs are present, is the room treated and does it remain closed until treatment is completed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Patient Care</b>		
When a patient needs to be transferred to another room due to bed bugs, are they asked to place all clothing and personal items into sealed plastic bags?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are clothing and personal items decontaminated using hot laundering or freezing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff members ask the patient to shower and give them a fresh hospital gown?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are patients and their family members and/or visitors informed about the situation and educated about bed bugs and how to eliminate them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
<b><i>Treatment and Control</i></b>		
Does the facility contract with a licensed pest management company to provide a comprehensive bed bug inspection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all rooms and equipment adjacent to the infested room (including storage rooms, vacuum cleaners, service carts, hallways, and laundry rooms) accessible to the pest management professional?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does facility management let the pest management professional determine whether treatment is necessary?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the facility adhere to the pest management professional's instructions on preparing the room for bed bug eradication, which may involve assistance with moving beds and other heavy furnishings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><i>Handling Infested Materials</i></b>		
Is all bedding separated, sealed in heavy plastic bags, and marked for disposal when signs of bed bugs are found in a patient's room?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff members ensure that all clothing, linens, and materials marked for disposal are not removed until after the pest management professional inspects and/or treats the room?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is all vacuumed waste and the vacuum cleaner bag disposed of in a plastic bag?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
After the room is treated, are all items that require disposal wrapped in a protective sheet and marked "bed bug infested" before removing them from the infested room for disposal or recycling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> McNeill, C., Jarrett, A., & Shreve, M. D. (2017, June). Bed bugs: Current treatment guidelines. *Journal for Nurse Practitioners*, 13(6), 381–388. Retrieved from [www.npjjournal.org/article/S1555-4155\(17\)30274-X/fulltext](http://www.npjjournal.org/article/S1555-4155(17)30274-X/fulltext)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ridge, R. A. (2019, August). Managing bedbugs in healthcare settings. *Nursing Management (Springhouse)*, 50(8), 40–45. doi: 10.1097/01.NUMA.0000575320.85830.0f

<sup>4</sup> Ibid; McNeill, et al., Bed bugs: Current treatment guidelines.

<sup>5</sup> Calhoun County, Iowa. (n.d.). *Bed bug prevention and control for health care settings*. Retrieved from [www.calhouncounty.iowa.gov/document\\_center/Public%20Health/Bed%20Bugs/HealthCareSettingGuidelines.pdf](http://www.calhouncounty.iowa.gov/document_center/Public%20Health/Bed%20Bugs/HealthCareSettingGuidelines.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> This checklist is based on information from the following sources: Florida Agency for Health Care Administration. (2014, January). *Bed bugs best management practices for assisted living facilities (ALFs)*. Retrieved from <https://ahca.myflorida.com/content/download/9638/file/BedBugManagementBestPracticesforALFs.pdf>; Braun, E. (2019, November 21). Control in hospitals & surgery centers. *Pest Control Technology*. Retrieved from [www.pctonline.com/article/control-in-hospitals---surgery-centers/](http://www.pctonline.com/article/control-in-hospitals---surgery-centers/); McNeill, et al., Bed bugs: Current treatment guidelines; ECRI. (2023, July 11). *Ask ECRI: Managing and treating patients with bedbugs*. Retrieved from <https://members.ecri.org/guidance/ask-ecri-managing-and-treating-patients-with-bedbugs>

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