

## Department of Public Health

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 12, 2012

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### Sleep Tight, Don't Let the Bed Bugs Bite

Bed bugs have traditionally been a problem in developing countries, but now they are now found across the globe. The presence of bed bugs has been spreading rapidly across the United States and has been reported in Racine. Prevention and proper treatment are the keys to controlling this little pest.

Bed bugs are small, flat, reddish-brown, wingless, parasitic insects that feed solely on the blood of people and animals while they sleep. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, bed bugs are not considered to be a medical or public health hazard and are not known to spread disease.

There are many signs and symptoms of a bed bug infestation. Although the name "bed bug" suggests that the pest is found in the bed, it can be found just about anywhere including inside tables, inside cracks and crevices, behind wallpaper and in luggage. Some important clues to look for include:

- Bite marks on the face, neck, arms, hands or other body parts received while sleeping
- The presence of the bed bugs' exoskeletons after molting
- Bed bugs in the fold of mattresses and sheets
- Rusty colored blood spots due to the blood filled fecal material that the bed bugs excrete on the mattress or nearby furniture
- A sweet musty odor

"The best thing to do if you think you have bed bugs is to call a licensed professional exterminator," said Marcia Fernholz, Environmental Health Division Director for the City of Racine Health Department. "Home remedies and partial treatments do not totally eliminate the problem and can result in future infestations and expense."

Prevention is the most important way to ensure your home is safe from bed bugs.

- Do not take beds or furniture from the curb that is being thrown out
- Look for bed bug signs while traveling and inspect clothes and luggage after a trip or hotel stay
- Check furniture you agree to store for someone
- Regularly check for bed bugs in sleeping areas
- Be conscious of visitors in your home who regularly stay in nursing homes, homeless shelters or other multi-unit housing situations

- Inspect the area and your items while doing laundry at the Laundromat
- Examine your vehicle after helping someone move
- Thoroughly inspect items from a rummage sale or secondhand store (mattresses, furniture, books, etc.)

For more information on bed bug prevention and treatment, please visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov).