

LEVELED BOOK • N

Bedbugs Bite!



Written by Joan Linck

www.readinga-z.com

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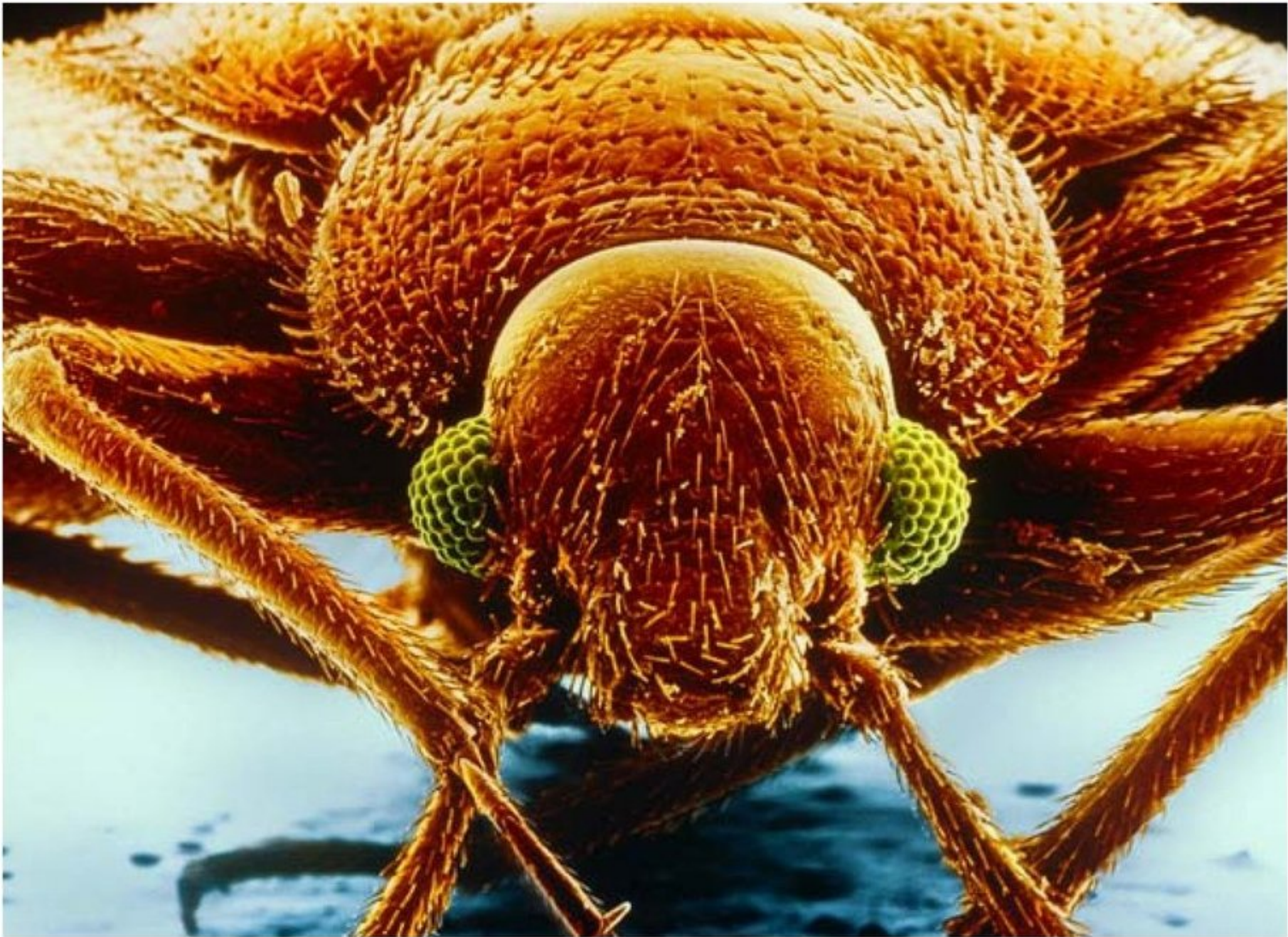


Table of Contents

Introduction	4
What Are Bedbugs?	5
Bedbug Life Cycle	8
World Travelers	10
Getting Rid of Bedbugs	12
Conclusion	14
Glossary	16



Introduction

*Good night. Sleep tight.
Don't let the bedbugs bite!*

These words were just an old rhyme a few years ago. Bedbugs (or “bed bugs”) were hard to find. But today these words are good advice. Bedbugs have returned. These little pests are causing big problems in cities all over the world.

What Are Bedbugs?

Bedbugs are brown, crawling insects that grow to be about the size of apple seeds. They hide in tight spaces during the day and are active at night. As their name suggests, bedbugs often live in people's beds. They might be hiding under your **mattress**. Bedbugs bite people or other animals to drink their blood.



A bedbug stands on a patch of skin as it feeds on human blood.

Bedbugs are not attracted to dirt or garbage. They don't care if their hiding spots are fancy or plain. People who keep their homes clean can get them. People with a lot of money or a little money can get them. Even movie stars get bedbugs!



A billboard warns people in New York City about bedbugs.



A man shares information at a meeting about the bedbug problem.

Unlike mosquitoes, which fly around to find their meals, bedbugs like the easy life. They bite when a person is quiet and still. Their **victims** may be sleeping in bed or sitting quietly, watching TV.

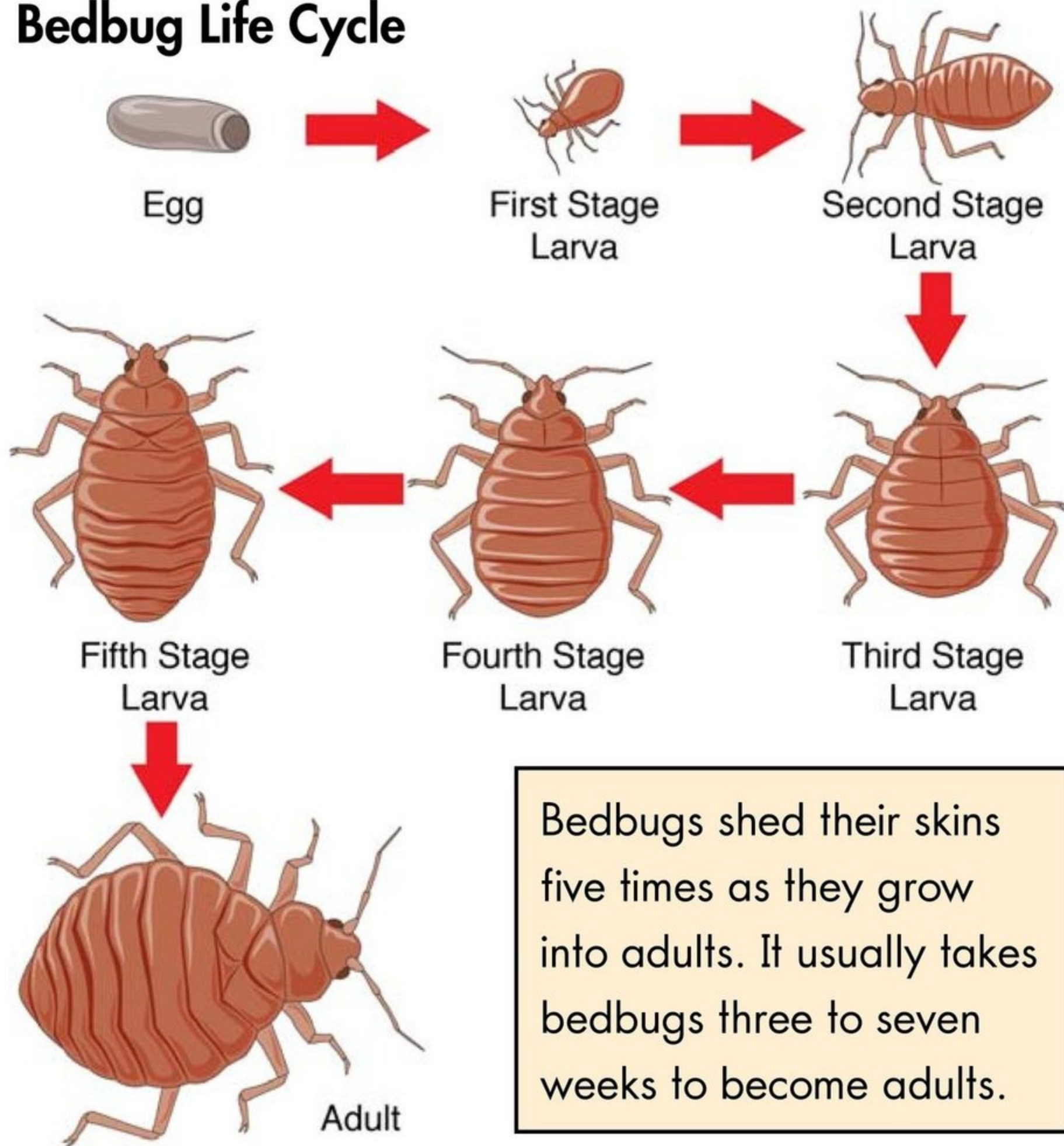
Bedbug Life Cycle

It doesn't take very long for a few bedbugs to become a lot of bedbugs. A female bedbug can lay more than two hundred eggs in her lifetime. The eggs hatch in six to ten days.

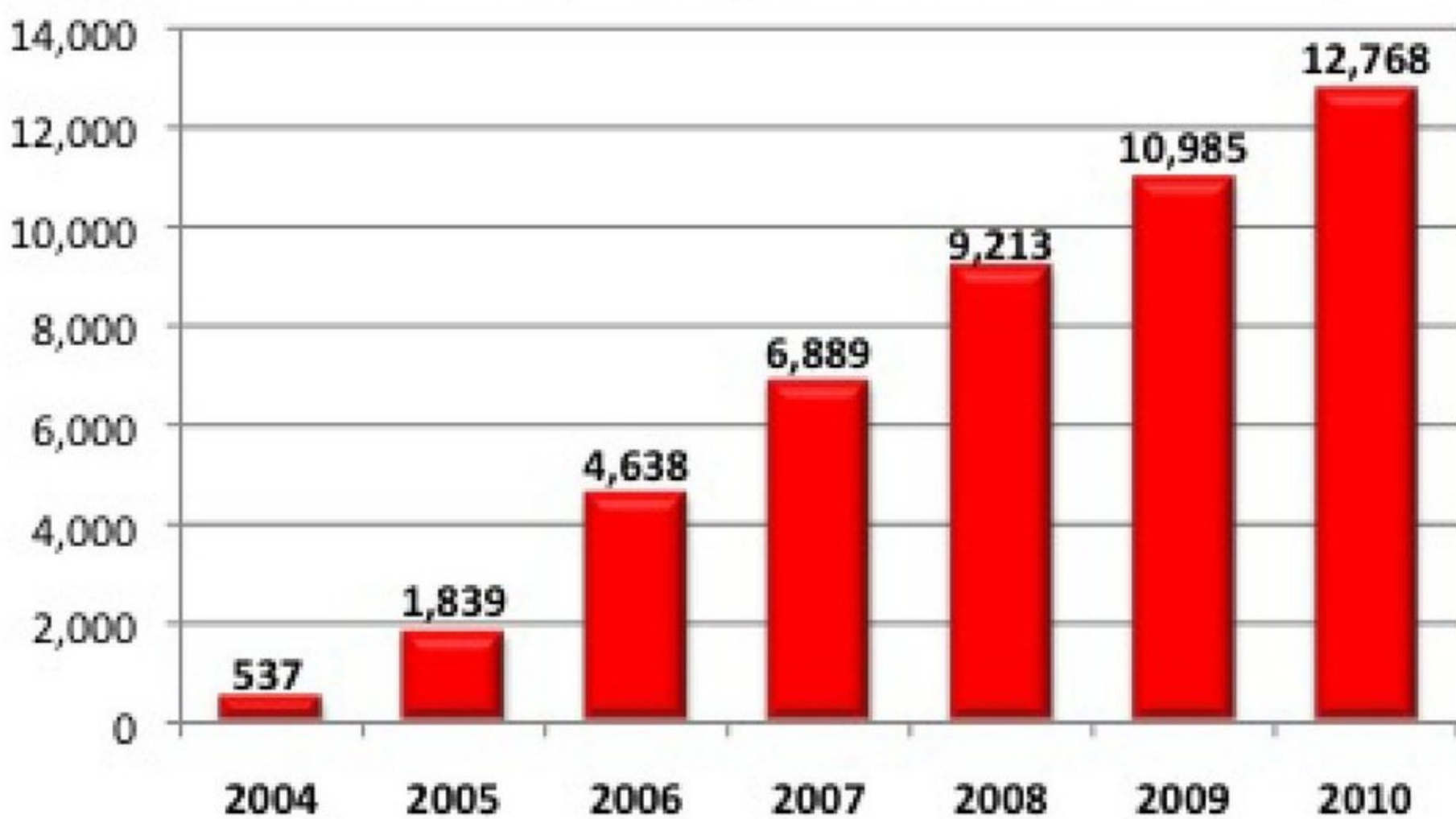
When a bedbug eats, its body swells up. As it **digests** its food, its body shrinks. As a bedbug grows up, its outer skin becomes too tight for its body. When this happens, the bug molts, or sheds, its outer skin. A bedbug molts five times before it is an adult.

A **developing** bedbug can go for months without eating. An adult bedbug can go for a year without food. But if a bedbug lives near people, it will eat every day.

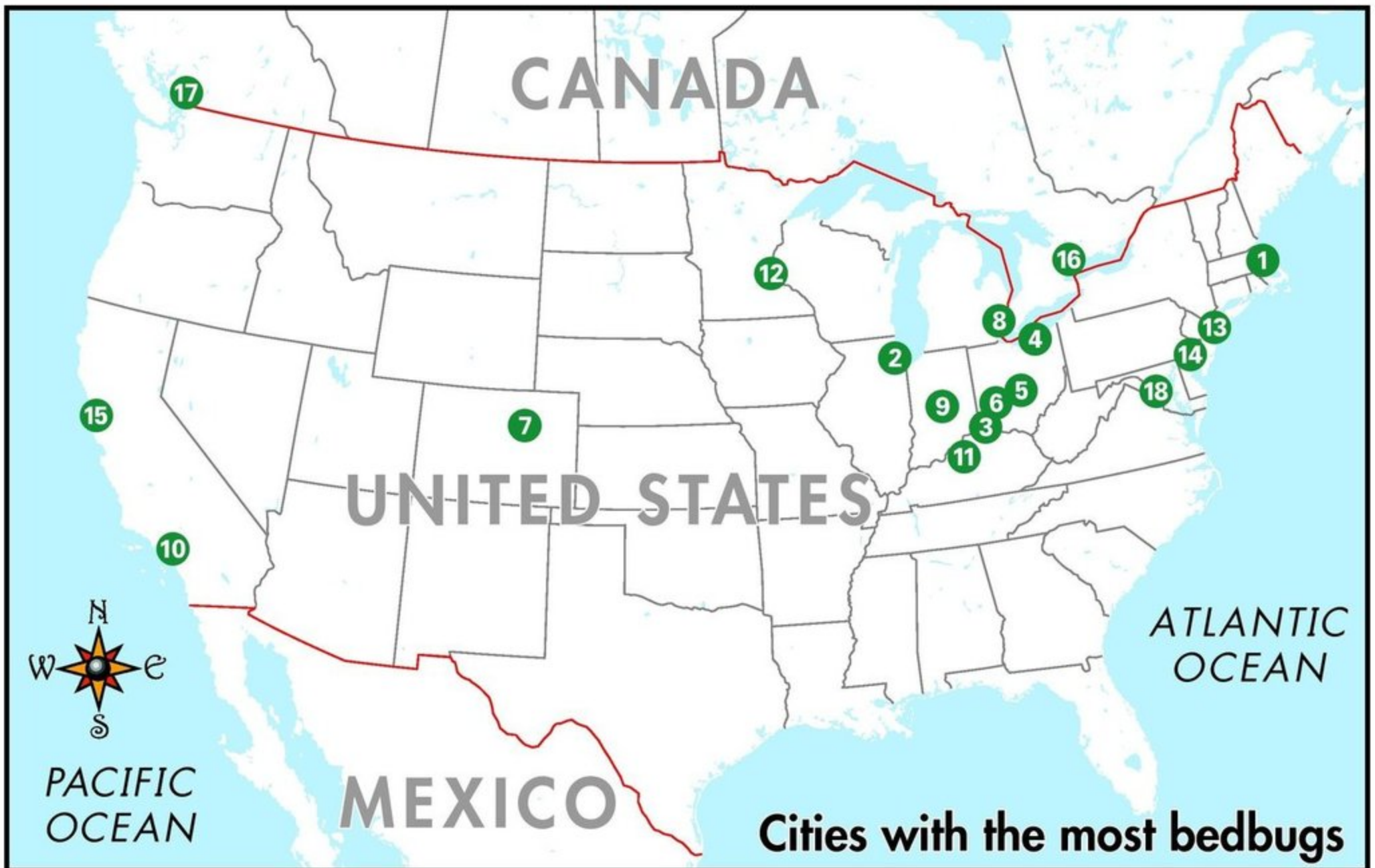
Bedbug Life Cycle



Number of Yearly Bedbug Complaints in New York City



Data source: NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development



Bedbugs have been reported in hundreds of cities across the United States and Canada. The following cities (listed alphabetically) have the most complaints about bedbugs.



- | | | |
|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Boston, MA | 7 Denver, CO | 13 New York, NY |
| 2 Chicago, IL | 8 Detroit, MI | 14 Philadelphia, PA |
| 3 Cincinnati, OH | 9 Indianapolis, IN | 15 San Francisco, CA |
| 4 Cleveland, OH | 10 Los Angeles, CA | 16 Toronto, ON |
| 5 Columbus, OH | 11 Louisville, KY | 17 Vancouver, BC |
| 6 Dayton, OH | 12 Minneapolis, MN | 18 Washington, D.C. |

World Travelers

Bedbugs can't fly. They only walk as fast as ladybugs. But these little **critters** travel all over the world. How do they do it? They sneak rides with people who are traveling.

A **suitcase** or moving box makes a good hiding spot for a bedbug. If a family brings that suitcase to a hotel, the bugs may crawl out. Some of the bedbugs might find hiding spots in the hotel. Some might hide in another person's suitcase and go home with them. Once they get to a new home, bedbugs travel from room to room by squeezing through tiny cracks in the walls or floors.



Bedbugs can sneak into suitcases to find new homes.

Getting Rid of Bedbugs

It's easy to spot bedbug bites. Many people get red, itchy bumps on their skin when they are bitten. But it's not as easy to spot the bedbugs. They can hide in tiny places and only come out when it's dark. But there are ways to find them.



Bedbug bites itch, but scratching them can make things worse.



Special dogs can help find hidden bedbugs.

Bedbugs often leave clues that they are around. If you look closely, you may find shed skin and dark spots of dried excrement, or poop, near their hiding areas. But the best way to find them is to hire a special dog. Some dogs are trained to smell bedbugs. They sniff all over homes or hotel rooms. When they smell bedbugs, they place a paw on the spot. Once the bugs are discovered, people can get rid of them with steam or chemicals.

Conclusion

Bedbugs are becoming common again in cities around the world. They are biting more people. Their bites don't hurt, and they usually don't spread germs or disease. But it's still not nice to get them; they can itch—a lot.

Things You Can Do:

1. Tell an adult if you find bites or other clues that bedbugs are nearby.
2. Wash your sheets, blankets, pillowcases, and bedspreads in hot water and dry them in a hot dryer.
3. Vacuum your mattress, bedframe, baseboards, and couches.
4. Wrap your mattress in a bedbug-proof mattress cover.
5. When staying in a hotel room, keep your clothes inside a closed suitcase and don't leave the suitcase on the bed or the floor.



If you do get bedbug bites, try to not scratch them. They can get **infected** if they are scratched open. And remember, you are not alone. People all over the world get bedbug bites. That's why for years people have said, "Good night. Sleep tight. Don't let the bedbugs bite!"



A worker uses steam to get rid of bedbugs.

Glossary

critters (<i>n.</i>)	live animals, usually small ones (p. 10)
developing (<i>adj.</i>)	growing into a more advanced form (p. 8)
digests (<i>v.</i>)	processes food in the body and turns it into energy (p. 8)
infected (<i>adj.</i>)	sickened by a disease-causing organism or substance (p. 15)
mattress (<i>n.</i>)	the part of a bed that your body rests on (p. 5)
suitcase (<i>n.</i>)	a boxlike container with a handle, used to carry clothes on trips (p. 11)
victims (<i>n.</i>)	people or other animals harmed by acts or conditions, such as crimes, wars, or natural disasters (p. 7)

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Back cover: Radar, a bedbug-sniffing beagle, searches a bed for signs of the insects.

Table of contents: A close-up view of a bedbug taken with a special microscope.

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LEVEL N	
Fountas & Pinnell	M
Reading Recovery	20
DRA	28