



31 October 2023

**BY EMAIL ONLY**

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae

Dáil Éireann

Leinster House

Kildare Street

Dublin 2

**Re: 46239/23 - To ask the Minister for Health what measures and guidance his Department and the HSE will put in place for people returning home from Paris and France to ensure Ireland does not face an outbreak or pandemic of bed bugs due to the outbreak seen in France in the past few months; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Healy-Rae

Thank you for your above query. I consulted with colleagues working in HSE Public Health: Health Protection in preparing this response.

**Bed bugs**

Bed bugs are small, flat parasitic insects called *Cimex lectularius* that live in cracks and crevices in and around beds. They crawl out at night and bite exposed skin to feed on blood. Adult bedbugs are oval-shaped, flat and up to 5mm long – similar to an apple seed. Bed bugs feed on blood. Usually during the night. The bite marks are similar to that of a mosquito or a flea. The bites can cause skin rashes and allergic reactions, as well as extreme irritation, they are not known to carry any infectious diseases. Excessive scratching can sometimes increase the chance of a secondary skin infection.

While traditionally bed bugs have been a problem more frequently seen in developing countries, bed bugs have now been identified in North America and Europe. Recently an upsurge in bed bugs has been reported in Paris.

Bed bugs are usually transported from place to place as people travel. The bed bugs travel in the seams and folds of luggage, overnight bags, folded clothes, bedding, furniture, and anywhere else where they can hide. For Irish residents returning from locations where bedbugs are known to be present the following advice applies: don't bring luggage or clothing into your house without checking it carefully for bedbugs. If further concerned, you can wash clothing on a hot wash (60C) and tumble dry on a hot setting for at least 30 minutes or alternatively put clothing in a plastic bag and put it in the freezer for 3 or 4 days.

Information on bed bugs including clinical signs and symptoms, prevention and treatment, as well as advice for people returning from areas where bed-bugs have been identified, is available to the public at [Bed bugs - Health Protection Surveillance Centre \(hpsc.ie\)](https://www.hpsc.ie/bedbugs/) Single infestations of bed bugs are not notifiable in Ireland, however, bed bug outbreaks are notifiable. To date in 2023, HPSC has not been notified of any bed bug outbreaks in Ireland.

We trust this answers your query.

Yours sincerely,



Dr John Cuddihy

National Director of Public Health

MCRN: 16227