

Occupational Health: Flea Prevention

1. What is flea-borne typhus (typhus)?

Flea-borne typhus is a disease that fleas can spread to humans. Bacteria (germs) found in infected fleas cause typhus. People get sick with flea-borne typhus when infected flea feces (poop) are rubbed into cuts or scrapes in the skin or rubbed into the eyes. Typhus is not transmitted from person-to-person.

2. What do fleas look like?

Fleas are very small, wingless bugs that may look like specks of dust. They may not be visible to the naked eye, as they're about 0.1 inches long.

3. How do fleas spread?

Fleas can jump about 1 foot, making it easy for them to move from one host to the next. Also, flea eggs laid on an animal can fall and lodge in the crevices of carpets and furniture and can start an infestation if not treated properly.

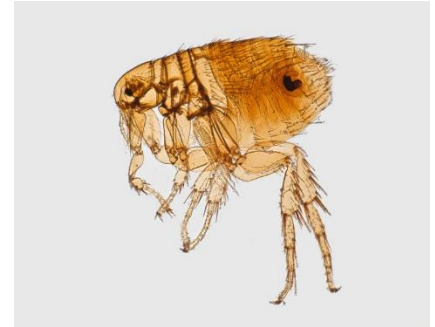
4. How do I protect myself from fleas?

- Wear EPA registered insect repellent containing DEET.
- Wear long sleeves and pants and socks tucked over your pants to protect from bites. Permethrin or DEET can be applied on clothes.
- Machine wash and dry all of your clothing in a hot cycle when you return home to ensure there are no eggs on them.

5. How do you treat your home if fleas get inside?

Remember fleas will only persist if you have animals or rodents on which they can live. If you believe you have a flea problem in your home:

- Vacuum all furnishings, upholstery, crevices of carpets, and floors to suck up the fleas or flea eggs and empty the vacuum bag afterwards in the outside garbage. Keep vacuuming everyday consistently.
- Hot soapy water kills fleas
 - Steam clean carpets: the hot steam and soap can kill fleas in all stages of the life cycle, especially 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.
- If you have pets, use a flea comb to remove adult fleas, especially the neck and tail areas, which is where the most fleas congregate. Hair can pass through the comb's teeth, but not the fleas.
- Use flea control products on your pets.
- Be sure to read and follow all label directions on any flea pesticide product you may use.



Key Points

- Typhus is transmitted by the bite of an infected flea. It is not transmitted from person-to-person.
- Use EPA registered insect repellent containing DEET.
- Wear pants and socks tucked over your pants to avoid getting bitten by fleas.
- Machine wash your clothes in a hot cycle once you return home.

For more information:

Environmental Protection Agency:

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-labels>

National Pesticide Information Center:

<http://npic.orst.edu/pest/flea.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/dpdx/fleas/index.html>