

Alarming combo: Bedbugs with 'superbug' germ found

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In a Feb. 1, 2011 file photo, bedbugs are seen next to the tip of a finger in a container from the lab at the National Pest Management Association, during the National Bed Bug Summit in Washington. In a study released Wednesday, May 11, 2011, Canadian scientists detected drug-resistant MRSA bacteria in bedbugs from three hospital patients from a downtrodden Vancouver neighbourhood. Bedbugs have not been known to spread disease, and there's no clear evidence that the five bedbugs found on the patients or their belongings had spread MRSA or a second less dangerous drug-resistant germ. However, bedbugs can cause itching that can lead to excessive scratching. That can cause breaks in the skin that make people more susceptible to these bacteria, noted Dr. Marc Romney, one of the study's authors. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon, File)

Hate insects? Afraid of germs? Researchers are reporting an alarming combination: bedbugs carrying "superbug" germs.

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The study is small and very preliminary, "But it's an intriguing finding" that needs to be further researched, said Romney, medical microbiologist at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver.

The hospital is the closest one to the poor Downtown Eastside neighborhood near the city's waterfront. Romney said he and his colleagues did the research after seeing a simultaneous boom in bedbugs and MRSA cases from the neighborhood.

Five bedbugs were crushed and analyzed. MRSA, or methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, was found on three bugs. MRSA is resistant to several types of common antibiotics and can become deadly if it gets through the skin and into the bloodstream.

Two bugs had VRE, or vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus Faecium*, a less dangerous form of [antibiotic-resistant bacteria](#).

Both germs are often seen in hospitals, and experts have been far more worried about nurses and other [health-care workers](#) spreading the bacteria than insects.

It's not clear if the bacteria originated with the [bedbugs](#) or if the bugs picked it up from already infected people, Romney added.

The study was released Wednesday by [Emerging Infectious Diseases](#), a publication of the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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