

# Patient Information for Spider bite in Infant/Neonate/Child/Adult

## Overview

Spiders are a member of the family Arachnida, and although greatly feared, spider bites are rather rare. Only a few species of spiders are able to puncture the skin to harm humans. People often mistake insect bites or skin infections for spider bites.

## Who's At Risk

The risk of being bitten by a dangerous spider is increased if you live or travel in the same area as venomous spiders and you disturb their habitat:

- Although widow spiders are found worldwide, the black widow spider is the most common of the widow spiders throughout the United States. They are usually found outdoors in wood piles, garages, sheds, gardening pots; rarely indoors.
- Recluse spiders are found worldwide in tropical and temperate climates, mostly in North and South America. In the US, the brown recluse spider is most common in southern and midwestern states, hiding in undisturbed quiet spots like closets, basements, cupboards, behind or under furniture, or outdoors in tree stumps or under rocks.
- Funnel-Web spiders include the hobo spider (aggressive house spider) in the Pacific Northwest and southwestern Canada. The most dangerous, the Sydney funnel-web spider, is found in Australia.
- Tarantulas are found worldwide, but in the US are predominant in the southwestern states. Pet tarantulas, mostly imported, have become popular throughout the United States.

## Signs & Symptoms

A spider bite is typically red, inflamed, and itchy on your skin. The severity of a spider bite depends on the type of spider, your body's sensitivity to the venom, your age and health, and the amount of venom injected into your body. Spider bites have varying symptoms so it is important to identify the type of spider that bit you.

Common symptoms of widow spiders are:

- Pain at site of bite
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid heart rate

- Abdominal pain
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Salivation

Common symptoms of recluse spiders are:

- Pain increasing during first 8 hours after bite
- Chills
- Fever
- Body aches
- Rarely, the skin can become dark blue or purple and develop into an ulcer

Common symptoms of funnel-web spiders are:

- Pain at site of the bite
- Redness
- Australian species – neurotoxic effects such as trouble breathing, high blood pressure, rapid heart rate, sweating, salivating, nausea and vomiting, muscle twitches, and agitation

Common symptoms of tarantula bite:

- Less common, red and painful bite
- More common, itching red sting from tarantula hairs
- Sometimes, tarantula hairs in the eye, causing eye irritation
- Allergic reaction such as runny nose

## **Self-Care Guidelines**

If you were bitten by a spider follow these guidelines:

- Gently wash the bite with soap and water

- Cool the bite with ice to reduce inflammation and pain
- Elevate the bite if it is on a hand or arm
- Over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil) can be used as pain relievers

## **When to Seek Medical Care**

Seek medical care if you are unsure if you were bitten by a poisonous spider. If you were bitten and have severe pain, abdominal cramps, difficulty breathing, or a growing ulcer seek medical attention immediately.

NOTE: if you were able to capture the spider, bring it with you for identification.

## **Treatments Your Physician May Prescribe**

Your health care provider will identify the type of spider bite and treat the symptoms of the bite. Your health care provider may also give you a tetanus shot if you have not had one in the past 5 years.

For more severe reactions, and especially for children, your health care provider may place you in observation until the reactions seem to be under control.