

AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

What you need to know to prevent a poisonous spider bite

Spiders always seem to be in the wrong place at the wrong time — behind your couch when you're rearranging furniture, in the garage when you're cleaning or in the leaf pile your kids can't wait to jump in. But really, spiders are usually unwelcome houseguests, especially those with poisonous bites.

Most of the 20,000 spider species found in the United States can't bite through human skin. The black widow and brown recluse are dangerous to humans. Both are more common in Southern states. Although their bites rarely are lethal, children are more likely to die than adults.



– Brown recluse spiders

Brown recluse spiders have a violin-shaped marking on their backs. Their bodies are yellowish, tan or dark brown, and they have thin gray legs covered with hair.

They love dry, warm places. When inside a house, they hide inside shoes, under couches, in stacks of clothes, in garages, in basements or near furnaces.

If bitten, symptoms may include tiny fang marks, dull pain that spreads quickly, muscle aches, and pain in the stomach, back, chest and legs. Four to eight hours after a bite, blisters may form. Most people are bitten while they are asleep.

– Black widow spiders

Black widows' bodies are black and shaped like an hourglass. They have a red or yellow marking on their body. Only the females are poisonous.

They like damp, dark places. You can find them in woodpiles, tree stumps, trash piles, storage sheds, gardens and under rocks. If black widows go inside a home, they hide in a dark corner.

If bitten, you may not even know at first because it feels like a pinprick. You may have swelling in the area of the bite, red marks, a lot of pain, stiffness, chills, fever, nausea and stomach pain.

If you think your child has been bitten by a brown recluse or a black widow spider, be sure to:

- Call your pediatrician or the Poison Help line at 800-222-1222 right away. Bites may need to be treated with anti-venom medication.
- Wash the area with soap and water.
- Apply an ice pack wrapped in a cloth.
- Keep the area raised if bitten on the arm or leg to stop the venom from spreading.

— Shayna Starr

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