

Spider Bite First Aid

The degree to which individuals fear snakes and spiders amazes this author. Because of that, topics on spiders and snakes are amongst the most searched out on the Internet. At least weekly, some educational channel is doing some documentary on spiders and snakes and they usually get high ratings. We have a very strong interest in the creepy crawlies that make the hair on our neck stand up and generate numerous myths and exaggerations.

Virtually all spiders in the United States are poisonous and that is how they attack their prey and feed. Native Americans had the highest respect for spiders as their web was one of the only creations in nature that was literally perfect in design. The vast majority of spider bites this examiner has seen over 30 years of practicing medicine are not spider bites at all. Some are insect bites, some are skin infections and abscesses, but not spider bites.

The only true way to diagnose a spider bite is to actually see the spider bite you. If you have killed the spider after it has bitten you, please bring the spider in to a provider. That helps diagnose the problem.

Approximately 98-99% of all spider bites are harmless and will resolve doing absolutely nothing. They will cause some local irritation, some itching but will resolve in 5-7 days. Some spider bites can lead to local skin infections which can be treated with antibiotics. These are not life-threatening and you do not need to be transported to a healthcare provider. It is also important to note that the vast majority of spiders are nocturnal and most spider bites are not caused by some aggressive attack by the spider. Rather, the human has invaded their territory by pressing up against them in some manner, provoking a bite response.

Signs and Symptoms

What you usually see with a true spider bite is a red wheal. The body is reacting with histamine and you will have a reaction to the area anywhere from the size of a dime, quarter to silver dollar. There will be itching, possibly pain to the area, and this will slowly subside. If the redness starts moving up the extremity, that is a sign of lymphangitis, which is the infectious process moving up the lymph system. One should then seek out a medical care provider.

Two spiders causing the most severe bites in the United States are the brown recluse and the black widow. If the skin at the area starts to break down and looks dark or black in nature, then the skin tissue is dying which could possibly represent the bite of a brown recluse. Those then indeed need to be taken care of as soon as possible. Very rarely do individuals die from brown recluse venom. Signs and symptoms of black widow bites, patients usually present with extreme belly pain. Black widow spider venom is a neurotoxin. Patients presenting are often mistaken as having appendicitis or an ovarian cyst. They will have some muscle rigidity and severe abdominal pain. These also need to be transported and evaluated. Many times the brown recluse bite is not painful at all, whereas the black widow bite is.

Knowing the geographical location of spiders is also important. It is very unlikely that someone will get bit by a brown recluse spider in Wisconsin. However if they are in

Kentucky, they have a higher chance. A brown recluse is a spider found in warmer climates and is also found in basements and attics, dark areas, hence the name recluse.

In summary, spider bites, most of the time, are much to do about nothing. Spider bites that are severe enough to require treatment occur very infrequently, but do get an enormous amount of press. Good judgment and rational thinking will help you enjoy the outdoors far more; there is simply no need to panic about the majority of spiders.