



How to Treat Spider Bites

Four Methods: [Sydney Funnel-Web Spider Bites](#) [Brazilian Wandering Spider Bites](#) [Black Widow or Brown Recluse Bites](#) [Non-Dangerous Spider Bites](#)

Although they may be painful or itchy, most spider bites are not serious and can be easily treated at home. This article will guide you through assessing and treating spider bites, and provide detailed information on the four types of spider bites worldwide that require emergency treatment.

Method
1

Sydney Funnel-Web Spider Bites

1 Identify the spider. The highly aggressive **Sydney funnel web spider** resembles a glossy tarantula and is found in dark, moist environments in Australia. **A bite requires immediate professional medical attention as envenomation symptoms progress quickly.** Initially the intensely painful bite will show little inflammation or blistering, but the person will sweat, have facial twitches, and may feel tingling around the mouth. Anti-venom does exist, and should be administered at a hospital as soon as possible.

2 Call emergency medical services.

3 Splint and gently wrap the length of the bitten extremity. Use a crepe or elastic bandage to slow the flow of venom. ^[1]

4 Immobilize the bite victim. It's important to reduce venom circulation on the way to getting medical treatment.

Method
2

Brazilian Wandering Spider Bites

1 Identify the spider. Brazilian Wandering spiders are large, aggressive nocturnal spiders found in South America. They build no webs, roam at night, and can be found in banana clusters or hiding in a dark environment. Their bites produce localized swelling and pain that radiates toward the torso, and may be accompanied by symptoms of nausea, vomiting, hypertension, breathing difficulties and, in males, an erection. Anti-venoms exist to help relieve symptoms; deaths are rare.

2 See a medical professional immediately. It's important to get immediate treatment, especially for children.

3 Cleanse the wound with warm water. This will help prevent an infection.

4 Apply a warm compress to the bite. This will increase blood flow and reduce blood pressure. ^[1]

5 Slow the spread of venom. Elevate the bitten extremity and move as little as possible to slow the spread of venom.

Method
3

Black Widow or Brown Recluse Bites

1 Identify the spider. Black widows and brown recluses are the only two types of dangerously poisonous spiders in the US. They both reside in warm climates and prefer dark, dry places like closets and wood piles. Here's what to look for:^[2]

- **Black widows** are large, glossy black spiders with a red hourglass shape on their belly. They are found

throughout North America. The bite may feel like a pinprick, and the site of the bite will be slightly red and swollen. Within thirty minutes to a few hours, however, intense pain and stiffness will begin. Severe abdominal pain, nausea, fever or chills may develop. Black widow bites are generally not fatal to healthy adults, and an anti-venom exists to relieve symptoms. ^[1]

- **Brown recluse spiders** can be many different shades of brown, but they have a violin-shaped marking on their back and long, spindly legs. Their bite initially stings, then deepens into intense pain over the next eight hours. A fluid-filled blister that turns into a steadily-enlarging open sore appears, and permanent tissue damage is preceded by a blue and red “target sign” around the wound site. ^[1] Other symptoms include a fever, rash, and nausea. Brown recluse spider bites can produce scarring, but have caused no deaths in the United States. There is no anti-venom, but treatments of bite lesions exist via surgery and antibiotics.

- 2 Get immediate medical care.** See a medical professional immediately for treatment. Move as little as possible to further slow the spread of venom.
- 3 Cleanse the wound thoroughly.** This will help prevent infection.
- 4 Apply an ice pack.** This will help slow the spread of the venom and bring down the swelling.
- 5 Slow the venom's spread.** If the bite is on an arm or a leg, elevate the limb and tie a snug bandage above the bite. Be careful not to cut off circulation!

Method 4


Non-Dangerous Spider Bites

- 1 Identify the spider.** Most spider bites aren't from dangerous spiders - in fact, many supposed spider bites are actually insect bites that are easily treated. If you suspect that you were bitten by a dangerous spider, go to the sub-sections below to confirm identity and administer proper first aid. Sometimes identification is not possible, but knowing what species of spider bit you can be helpful to a medical professional when determining treatment.
 - Try to save the specimen, even if it's squashed. Rubbing alcohol can be used to preserve a spider.
 - If you cannot find the spider, move on to cleaning and examining the bite area.
- 2 Wash the bite area with cool soapy water.**^[3] This will clean the wound and help prevent infection.
- 3 Apply a cool compress, such as an ice pack.** This will ease the pain of the bite and help the swelling go down for 20 to 30 min.
- 4 Elevate bitten extremities.** This is helpful for reducing inflammation and swelling.
- 5 Relieve minor symptoms of pain using Aspirin or acetaminophen (Tylenol).** Children or teenagers recovering from chickenpox or who have flu-like symptoms should not take Aspirin. ^[4]
- 6 Monitor the bite for the next 24 hours to ensure symptoms don't worsen.** Within a few days, the swelling should go down and the bitten area should feel less painful. Call the poison control center or see a doctor if symptoms don't improve.
- 7 Know when to see a doctor.** In some cases, a bite from a normally non-dangerous spider can cause an allergic reaction. Call emergency medical services immediately if the person with the spider bite has the following symptoms:
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Nausea
 - Muscle spasms
 - Lesions

- Tightening in the throat that makes it hard to swallow
- Sweating profusely
- Feeling faint


Community Q&A

Are all spider bites painful?

 No, some are so small you barely notice and others are itchy rather than painful. For bites that are painful, follow the spider bites treatment outlined in this article.


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Should I treat a swelling bite with heat or cold on my leg?

 If it's painful and swelling/red, it's better to use a cold compress on your leg.


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What do you do if you are under 10 years old and you get bitten by a dangerous spider?

 Tell a parent or other trusted person immediately. Seek immediate medical attention unless you know it is not harmful. Put an ice pack on it to make sure that you do not feel pain. Get straight to hospital or other health center which can treat you.


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What if I don't know what kind of spider bit me?

 Contact a doctor if the bite wound continues to grow, swells, turns bright red or causes pain or numbness. The doctor may be able to determine the type of spider that bit you.


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What should I do if I am not near a hospital?

 Call the local emergency services to transport you more quickly.


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What if a spider bite only causes swelling?

 If it's not painful, you should be good to go. However, if you feel even a slight pain, use a cold compress.

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How do I figure out whether a bite is from a fire ant or a spider; and how do I relieve the pain?

 Fire ant bites are usually more itchy and look a little different than spider bites; however, they can be treated the same way using any of the tips in this article.

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Tips

- Flick away an unwelcome spiders on your skin—smashing the spider against you causes the fangs to spring into a biting position.
- Clean your home often—most spiders prefer dark, undisturbed environments.
- Shake any clothing or shoes left undisturbed on the floor or in your closet before wearing.
- Wear gloves and tuck pants into your socks when working in basements, outdoors or anywhere where spiders are common.
- Move beds away from corners and walls to help prevent spiders from sheltering in bed linens.
- Properly insulate homes to reduce spiders from entering.
- Applying an insect repellent containing DEET may help deter spiders.
- Tell a trusted adult right away just in case the spider was poisonous.

Sources and Citations

1. ↑ ^{1.01.11.21.3}<http://www.ajtmh.org/content/71/2/239.full>
2. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/first-aid/first-aid-spider-bites/basics/art-20056618>
3. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/first-aid/first-aid-spider-bites/basics/art-20056618>

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