

Spider Bites



REDBACK SPIDERS

- Red back spider bites are common. They very rarely cause death.
- They can cause severe pain at the site of the bite, and more rarely sweating, muscle weakness, feeling ill and vomiting. There may be tummy pain.
- The symptoms can get worse for an hour or two.

First aid

- Apply an icepack to lessen the pain.
- Do not apply a pressure bandage as this can make the pain worse.
- Keep the person as quiet as possible.
- Take the person to a doctor as soon as possible in case anti-venom is needed (it is usually not needed).

WHITE-TAILED SPIDERS

- White-tailed spiders are common. Quite a lot of people get bitten because spiders are found in homes, perhaps in clothing or shoes left on the floor - another good reason for putting your stuff away!
- There may be stinging, then an itchy lump.
- These spiders used to be thought to cause ulcers at the site of the bite. This is now known to be untrue. Probably white-tailed spider bites do not cause much reaction for most people.

First aid

- Use an ice pack for the pain and see a doctor if symptoms persist.

FUNNEL-WEB AND MOUSE SPIDERS

- Funnel-web spiders (Eastern Australia) can cause serious health problems and if they are severe and untreated they may cause death.
- Funnel-web spider bites can be painful.
- Since the use of anti-venom, no-one in Australia has died of a spider bite.
- Clear rubbish where spiders can lurk.
- Don't annoy spiders - your fun can end up being most unfunny!

First aid

- For funnel-web and mouse spider bites, get the person who has been bitten to the doctor or hospital straight away.
- The effects on the body often start quickly, with tingling of the lips and twitching of the tongue.
- Place a firm pressure bandage over the bite area, then down the limb, and then up again to the groin or armpit.
- Use a splint to prevent movement.
- Keep the person still so that the poison does not move any faster.
- Try to keep the person calm. These will help prevent the poison from spreading.

HOUSE SPIDERS

- Brown and black house spiders will bite occasionally.
- Their bites may cause local pain and swelling.
- Occasionally there can be skin problems around the bite which takes some time to heal.

First aid

- Use ice pack if needed for pain and swelling.
- Antihistamines and paracetamol for pain may help.

HUNTSMAN SPIDERS

- These spiders come into houses, especially in summer. They are usually timid.
- Bites cause pain around the bite and occasionally headache and vomiting.
- If any reactions happen away from the site of the bite with any spider bite, see your doctor.

Other Bites



FLEAS

- Fleas are small, brown, wingless insects about 1.5mm to 4mm in size. They have long hind legs and can jump up to 2 metres.
- Cat and dog fleas are the most common in Australia.
- Fleas breed in the fur of animals and feed off their blood.
- Flea eggs fall off the animals and can collect around animal bedding and resting places.
- Larvae (baby fleas) feed off food scraps, animal and human skin scales and flea poo. Adult fleas feed off blood and they sometimes bite people as well as animals.
- Flea bites on people are usually found on the lower parts of their legs and their feet.
- People and animals often become sensitive to the bites, causing intense itching.

Controlling fleas

- Regularly vacuum floors and any areas where animals rest or sleep.
- Wash animal bedding in hot water regularly. Treat bedding with insecticides if necessary.
- Wash your dog with a flea control shampoo, brush your cat with a flea control powder, or use liquid that is squeezed onto their skin.
- Make sure that you wash yourself really well afterwards.
- Once you have treated pets for fleas, keep them out of the house until you're sure that the fleas are all gone.
- Animals with fleas should also be treated for tapeworm.
- If fleas keep coming back, you may have to treat floors and animal bedding with insecticide after cleaning and washing.
- A pest control operator or your local council can give advice in difficult cases.

ANTS

- Nearly all kinds of ant can bite or sting.
- Ant bites can hurt for some hours and be red and swollen.
- Sometimes ant bites can cause allergic reactions (any reaction that is away from where the bite is will need immediate medical attention).
- There are now jumping ants in parts of Australia and they can cause very painful bites and allergic symptoms such as swelling around the bite area in sensitive people.