

Arachnids

Discussion Questions:



- 1) What should you do if you are bitten by a spider or a tick?
- 2) What can you do to avoid spider and tick bites?

What should you do if you are bitten by a spider?

In Australia, there are two types of spider that can be potentially deadly for humans: the funnel web spider and the red back spider. However, the treatment for the two spiders are different. If it is safe, catch the spider to take to the hospital for identification.

NB It is important to check relevant government advice regarding first aid procedures, as recommendations may change. The following information is based on recommended Australian first aid procedures for 2014:

What should you do if you think you have been bitten by a funnel web spider?

- 1) Don't panic. Try to identify the type of spider. (See picture top right.)
- 2) Call for help then lay quiet and still. (Call an ambulance)
- 3) Apply a pressure bandage firmly around the affected bite site, beginning at the fingers or toes. Wrap the bandage as far up the limb as possible to reduce the spread of venom.
- 4) Apply a splint to immobilise the limb and keep still - this will help to slow the spread of venom.
- 5) Seek medical assistance. Hospitals have supplies of anti-venom for the funnel web spider.



What should you do if you think you have been bitten by a red back spider?

- 1) Don't panic. Try to identify the type of spider. A red back spider has a distinctive stripe down its abdomen. The stripe can range in colour from dull to bright. (See bottom right.)
- 2) Call for help then stay quiet and still.
- 3) Do NOT apply a pressure bandage. The red back spider venom acts more slowly. Apply ice to reduce pain. (Stopping the spread of venom with a compression bandage can actually increase the pain.)
- 4) Seek medical assistance. Hospitals have supplies of anti-venom for the red back spider.



What should I do for a bite from any other type of spider?

- 1) Don't panic.
- 2) Wash the affected area.
- 3) Apply an icepack to relieve pain.
- 4) Seek medical attention if severe symptoms develop (for example vomiting).



Removal of Ticks

Generally, ticks should be removed with tweezers as soon as possible. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the tick is not squeezed too tightly as it may inject more toxin into the body. Infection can also result if part of the tick remains in the skin.

It is important to check your local region's recommendations for treatment of tick bites as there are many species of ticks, and some are more dangerous to humans and animals than others. It is also important to be aware that a tick's toxin may induce an allergic reaction in some people.

Tick Bite Prevention for Humans

- 1) Wear long sleeved tops, long pants tucked into socks and a wide brimmed hat when working in known tick regions.
- 2) Keep shrubbery and lawns around your home trimmed and clear away excess leaf litter.
- 3) Check clothing and your body for ticks after being in a known tick area. Look behind the ears, back of the head, groin, armpits and backs of knees.



Tick Bite Prevention for Animals

- 1) Apply appropriate preventative treatments.
- 2) Check the fur of animals daily during tick season, paying particular attention to areas behind the ears and head, between toes, under armpits and around the tail.