



Brown Recluse Spider

Brown recluse spiders (*Loxoceles reclusa*) are usually light to medium brown in color with a darker violin-shaped marking on their back. The base of the violin marking is near the head, with the neck of the violin pointing toward the abdomen. Their bodies are about a quarter of an inch in length, and the thin legs about one inch long. Unlike most spiders, which have eight eyes, the brown recluse has six eyes.

As the name implies, brown recluse spiders like to live in dark, protected areas. They can live outdoors or indoors. In North Carolina, they are most likely to be found in a house or storage building. The brown recluse builds a small, flat mat of silk in which it hides. This web is usually built in tight places like under rocks, piles of wood, stacks of papers, folded clothing or other items that are left undisturbed. The brown recluse does not trap its prey in the web but chases and catches it.

The brown recluse can be found in North Carolina; however, actual collections of this spider are few. It is much less common than the black widow.

Like the black widow, the brown recluse spider is not especially aggressive but will bite if threatened.

The venom of the brown recluse has a different effect than that of the black widow. It causes the flesh around the bite to break down, eventually causing an open wound. At first, the bite of a brown recluse may not be painful, but pain and swelling may start several hours after the bite. Within 24 hours, the area around the bite may become very sore, and the skin becomes discolored. After a week or more, the skin around the bite may turn black and eventually deteriorate, leaving an open wound.

The size of the wound may vary from less than an inch to several inches across. The wound may take weeks to heal; in some cases, skin grafts may be

needed to repair the damage caused by the bite. There may be other causes for what appears to be a brown recluse bite such as a bacterial infection or a skin disease.

Brown recluse bites are rarely fatal, but if you think you have been bitten by a brown recluse spider, see a doctor as soon as possible. Save the spider if possible, and bring it with you to the doctor. Treatment may include a tetanus shot, antibiotics, steroids or certain other medications that prevent the wound from expanding. Removing skin around the bite may be helpful, if done soon after the bite.

Spider Control

It is best to leave spiders alone as they are typically harmless to people and can even be beneficial. The best way to keep spiders out of your house is to keep the house clean. Vacuum often, including under furniture and in closets, garages and basements. This will also reduce insect populations in the home, removing sources of food for spiders. Also seal any openings that might allow spiders or insects to enter the home.

A spider found indoors can be trapped and placed outside. If necessary, insecticides can be used to control spiders and the insects they feed on.

Treatments around the exterior may keep spiders and insects from coming indoors. It is important to read and follow label instructions when using insecticides. Glueboards placed in dark corners may trap spiders and insects. To avoid spider bites, check before placing your hands in dark, undisturbed places or when moving boxes or other stored items. Shake out clothing or shoes that have not been used recently.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Contact your local health department or the Public Health Pest Management Section at (919) 733-6407.



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Division of Environmental Health
Public Health Pest Management Section
<http://www.deh.enr.state.nc.us/phpm/index.htm>

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Spiders



Some Facts

Spiders are very common in and around homes.

All spiders are venomous, but most spiders are not dangerous to people.

Spider Biology

Spiders are animals called arachnids, and their closest relatives are ticks and mites. Unlike insects, which have six legs and one pair of antennae, spiders have eight legs and no antennae.

All spiders are predators and use their venom to capture their prey before eating it. Some spiders, like the orb weaver, build fancy webs to trap and capture insects. Other spiders, like the wolf spider, are active hunters and pursue their prey by chasing it. Some spiders may actually dive into water to catch small fish or tadpoles!

Spiders live in a variety of places including homes, gardens, forests or grassy areas. Depending upon the type of spider, they may live a few months to a few years. A female can produce one to several egg sacs during her lifetime. Each sac may contain as many as 100 eggs from which the young spiders emerge. Most spiders are beneficial to have around your home because they eat insects.

Spider Bites

If they feel threatened, spiders will bite people. Bites usually result from someone accidentally placing their hand where a spider is hiding or from walking into a web. Most spider bites are not dangerous and will only cause pain, swelling or redness.

If a spider bites you, clean and wash the wound. Apply a cool compress to reduce swelling and minor pain. Aspirin or other pain reliever may be needed. See a doctor for bites that seem to be more serious.

The black widow and brown recluse are the two spiders in North Carolina that are considered most dangerous to people. Both of these spiders are easy to recognize.

Black Widow Spider

Black widow spiders (*Latrodectus mactans*) are shiny black and have a very rounded abdomen with a red hourglass on the underside. Their bodies are about a quarter to a half-inch in length, and they have long slender legs. Black widow spiders make tangled webs resembling cobwebs in which to trap their prey.

Black widows prefer to live in hollow and protected spaces. Gaps in woodpiles, overturned buckets, old tires and meter boxes often house black widows. They usually live outdoors and are less likely to be found in homes. At times, the black widow may eat the male widow spider, but this is more of a myth than a fact.

While the black widow is not very aggressive, it will bite if threatened. The bite of the black widow can be very painful. The venom acts on the nervous system and can cause a variety of symptoms. Soon after a bite, a person may experience sweating, nausea, weakness, increased blood pressure, tightness in the chest and abdomen, and pain in the lymph glands and muscles.

When bitten by a black widow spider, apply a cool compress to the affected area as soon as possible and seek medical attention. If possible, bring the spider to the doctor. This will help to diagnose and treat the bite. The doctor will prescribe treatment to relieve the pain and muscle cramping as well as antibiotics and a tetanus shot. An antivenin is available and may be used for severe reactions. Black widow bites rarely cause death, but they can be very serious for the young, old or sick.