

# SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY

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## BLACK WIDOWS



Black widows prefer to nest near the ground, in dark, undisturbed areas, such as low shrubs. Indoors, black widows similarly occur in dark, undisturbed dark places such as behind furniture, under desks, closets, woodpiles, garages, crawl spaces of homes and other undisturbed basement and attic areas. Only the female black widow is poisonous. Female black widows are long-legged, shiny, coal-black spiders with a red hourglass shape on their underside. Female black widows are usually about 2 inches across. Black widow spiders tend to bite defensively when their webs are disturbed.

### *Signs & Symptoms of a Bite*

- ✦ In most cases of a black widow bite, symptoms consist only of minimal to sharp pain followed by swelling and redness at the site of the bite (occasionally with two tiny red spots)
- ✦ In some cases, severe symptoms appear within 30 - 60 minutes that includes:
  1. Muscle cramps and spasms that start near the bite and then spread and increase in severity for 6 to 12 hours
  2. Chills, fever, nausea, or vomiting
  3. Severe abdominal pain
  4. Seizures
  5. Stupor, restlessness, or shock
  6. Severe high blood pressure

### *Bite Prevention*

- ✦ Always wear gloves and a long-sleeved shirt when working in areas that have been undisturbed for some time and around good hiding places for spiders

### *Treatment of a Bite*

- ✦ Get medical help immediately - call your health professional, hospital, or poison information center at 1-800-222-1222
- ✦ Remain calm - too much excitement or movement will increase the flow of poison into the blood
- ✦ Place ice to the bite area
- ✦ Don't use a tourniquet, it may be dangerous
- ✦ Try to positively identify the spider or catch it to confirm its type