

MAFES Dawg Tracks



August 11, 2008 *Safety Tips: Brown Recluse Spiders*



Several weeks ago, I received some photos of the results of bites from Brown Recluse spiders. We received several calls regarding these insects and the photos. I think it will be worth your reading about the various aspects of the cause and effect of these critters.

According to my information, most spiders are harmless to humans. In the three Americas, there are said to be 20,000 species of these insects. There are 60 types capable of biting humans and within this group, there are four known to be dangerous to humans. They are the brown recluse, black widow, hobo or aggressive house spider and the yellow sac spider. In this select group, only the brown recluse and the black widow have ever been associated with significant disease and very rare reports of death. Deaths from the brown recluse have only been reported in kids younger than 7 years old. They are native to the Midwest and Southeastern states. Population of this species is very rare outside these areas.

Brown recluse spiders are recognizable by a violin pattern on their backs, with the base of the violin at the base of head and the neck of the violin pointing toward the rear. They are non-hairy with yellowish-tan to dark brown with darker legs. Including their legs, they measure about one inch in length. They have six eyes. Most other species have eight. The brown recluse's six eyes cannot be seen with the naked eye.

PREVENTION-

The brown recluse is not aggressive and will only bite when they are threatened. They seek out warm areas that are dark and dry like closets, attics, porches, barns, basements, woodpiles and old tires. Following are some specific examples of their habitations that we can eliminate and help in preventing them from coming our way:

- Performance of regular housecleaning
- Reduce the amount of clutter in garages, attics and basements
- Keep firewood, building materials and other debris away from the house's foundation
- If you have window shutters, clean behind them
- Consideration should be given to installing yellow or sodium vapor light bulbs in outdoor entrances. These lights are less attractive to insects and will draw fewer spiders to these locations.

BITE SYMPTOMS-

Brown recluse spider bites will go unnoticed much of the time, because the bite is usually painless. Sometimes a small burning sensation will occur, like a bee sting at the onset of a bite. The actual symptoms normally take from 2 to 8 hours to be noticed. Most bites cause little tissue destruction.

Victims may experience the following symptoms:

- Severe pain at the site of the bite after about 4 hours
- Severe itching
- Nausea
- Fever
- Myalgias (muscle pain)

At the front end of a bite, the site will become a mild red color and looking closely you can see the fang marks. Occasionally the reaction will be having severe blistering, sometimes leading to blue discoloration and ultimately leading to necrotic lesions and scarring.

- ~Blistering is common
- ~Necrosis (death) of the skin and subcutaneous (fat) (less common)
- ~Severe destructive necrotic lesions with deep wide borders (rare)

SELF-CARE AT HOME-

Home care is simple, but it doesn't replace the fact that you must see a doctor or emergency help:

- Apply ice to decrease pain and swelling
- Elevate the area, if possible, to a level above the heart
- Wash the bite area with cool water and soap
- Avoid strenuous activity as this tends to spread the venom.
- Use acetaminophen for pain relief

REFRAIN FROM THE FOLLOWING TECHNIQUES-

- Do not place heat on the bite as this will enhance tissue destruction.
- Do not apply steroid creams like hydrocortisone to the bite location
- Do not remove the spider venom with suction devices or attempt to cut out the affected tissue.
- Do not apply electricity to the bite area. These methods haven't shown any positive results and can damage the skin tissue with secondary burns.

**YOUR SKIN HAS NO CLUES
ABOUT THE BROWN RECLUSE!!**

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GET THE SAFETY ITCH!!

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Excerpts: <http://www.emedicinehealth.com>