

# Spider bite

People are often concerned about spider bites but of all the many different spiders we find in and around our homes there are only four spiders that can cause illnesses. They are the button spiders known as the black button spider and the brown button spider, and the sac spider and the violin spider.

People often confuse the brown and black button spiders. The brown button spiders are found around the house especially in outbuildings and under garden furniture and windowsills. The orange or red hourglass marking on the stomach is typical of a brown button spider. Their egg sacs are spiky in appearance.



Brown button spider



Brown button spider  
eggs



Black button  
spider



Black button spider eggs

The black button spider does not have any red markings on the stomach and lives mostly in the veld. When bitten by a black button spider it is usually painful. Within an hour the following may happen:

- you may experience muscle pain and cramps
- you may feel as if you cannot breath
- your legs will feel weak
- you will become anxious and sweat a lot.

If you see the black button spider bite you or if you have any of these symptoms, you must go to the doctor immediately.

A bite from the brown button spider is four times less venomous than that of the black button spider, but it can also be very painful. People bitten by brown button spiders usually do not have to go the doctor as the symptoms are usually very mild and resolve quickly. However, small children may need to go to the doctor if symptoms similar to that of the black button spider bite develops.

The sac and violin spiders do live in houses and can be found in curtain folds and bedding. The violin spiders look similar to daddy long legs spiders and people often confuse the two spiders. It is important to know that the daddy long legs spiders are not venomous. There is a myth or urban legend implying that the daddy long legs spiders are very venomous but due to their small mouth parts cannot bite. None of this is true.



Daddy long legs spider



Violin spider



Sac spider

Both the sac and violin spiders mostly come out to hunt at night time therefore we often get bitten in our sleep. These bites can cause damage to the skin.

- In the beginning it looks similar to a mosquito bite or tick bite.
- The area on the skin will be red and slightly swollen and it is often itchy.
- In the next 12 hours painful blisters can develop. In the centre of this area a black hole might be seen.
- These bites must be treated by a doctor as a severe necrotic ulcer may develop which will need antibiotic treatment.
- **You must visit the same doctor regularly to make sure treatment is effective as it can often take a long time for the wound to heal.**



Baboon spider



Rain spider

Bites by big spiders like the baboon spiders, rain spiders and wandering spiders can also be very painful but they are not venomous. Just disinfected and kept the bite site clean as with any other insect bite because it can cause infection if it is neglected.

What to do in case of a spider bite:

- If you see the spider bite you, take a photo of the spider. The spider can then be identified and this will help to provide the correct treatment.
- If you think it is a button spider, please see a doctor as soon as possible.
- If you did not see the spider bite you, but later see a red area develop, do not scratch. Keep the wound clean at all times.
- Please visit the same doctor regularly so that they can see that treatment is working.
- You or your doctor can call the PIHWC at **0861 555 777**