

MISSOURI
POISON CENTER
1-800-222-1222

A Program of SSM Health Cardinal Glennon

**STINGING INSECTS,
SPIDERS & SNAKES**



STINGING INSECTS

Bites and stings happen. The stings and bites from most insects are more often a nuisance than a serious problem. A person’s response to a bite or sting depends on his or her sensitivity to the insect’s venom. Most people have only mild reactions.

LOCAL REACTIONS

A local reaction is a symptom(s) that is in the actual area of the sting. Symptoms may include swelling at the sting site, redness, warmth, pain, or itching. While these reactions feel very unpleasant, they are not life threatening.

TO TREAT A LOCAL REACTION TO A STING:

Remove the stinger (if present) by gently scraping across the sting with a broad, firm, and flat object like a credit card or stiff cardboard. Do not pinch the stinger or use tweezers, as this can squeeze more venom into the skin.

Remove jewelry near the sting site, as swelling may occur.

Wash the area with soap and water to prevent infection.

Apply an ice pack or cold compress to the sting site – 15 minutes on then 15 minutes off – for as long as needed to reduce swelling and pain.

Apply hydrocortisone cream to the site of the sting to help decrease redness, swelling, and itching.

Apply topical antibiotic ointment/cream to help prevent infection.



ALLERGIC REACTIONS

Some people are highly sensitive and allergic to the venom of bees, wasps, hornets, yellow jackets, and ants. In addition to a local reaction, a person who is allergic may have the following symptoms:

- *Difficulty breathing*
- *Drop in blood pressure*
- *Swelling of lips or throat*
- *Dry, hacking cough*
- *Tightness in throat or chest*
- *Pale or flushed skin*
- *Fast heart rate*
- *Swollen or itchy eyes*
- *Hives*
- *Nausea, vomiting or stomach cramps*

TREATMENT OF AN ALLERGIC REACTION:

CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY!

If the person is unconscious and breathing, lay the person on his or her side to allow drainage from the mouth.

Most people who are severely allergic to stings carry an EpiPen®. Check the person to see if they have such a pen and follow the instructions on the label.

TIPS TO PREVENT STINGS

Wear light colored, long sleeved shirts and pants.

Use insect repellents.

Avoid using scented soaps, perfumes, lotions, or hair sprays.

Do not walk around bare footed.

If you are known to have allergic reactions, keep an EpiPen® on hand and know how to use it.

Pour sodas and other drinks into cups. Most stings in the mouth come from a wasp or bee that crawled inside a can. Drinking from a cup will allow you to see the bee. Don’t leave food containers open.

Wear a hat and gloves while working among flowers and fruit trees.

VENOMOUS SPIDERS

There are two types of Missouri spiders which have venom that can be poisonous to humans: the black widow and the brown recluse.



BLACK WIDOW

The female black widow is jet black with a red hourglass shaped marking on the underside of her abdomen. Males are smaller, brown and not a big threat to people.

Black widows live in undisturbed places such as woodpiles, dark corners of barns, garages, houses, and under boards and rocks. The bite almost always becomes painful within 30 minutes to 2 hours. By 3 to 4 hours there may be muscle twitching near the bite which can lead to cramping, weakness and stiffness in the shoulders, back, chest, or stomach. Other symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, headache, anxiety, and changes in blood pressure.



BROWN RECLUSE

This non-aggressive spider hides in undisturbed areas such as closets, corners, woodpiles, and under sinks. Bites often occur when the victim puts on clothing in which a spider has been hiding. The color of this spider varies from light tan to brown with a violin-shaped marking on the top of the head. Symptoms at the site of the bite may start with pain, redness, swelling, itching, and burning. Usually within 1 to 3 days, the bite may look like red rings around a black blister and could take on a “bull’s eye” appearance. It may take up to 14 days to see the full effects of the bite. More serious symptoms such as, fever, rash, flu-like symptoms or darkened urine, are less common.

SPIDER CONTROL

Cleaning is the first step in spider control. Regular vacuuming, cleaning closets and storage spaces, reducing clutter, and shaking out shoes and clothing before wearing help to reduce the chances of a bite. Prevent spiders from coming inside by caulking cracks and crevices on the outside of the house.

FIRST AID FOR SPIDER BITES:

Call the Missouri Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Wash the bite site with soap and water.

Apply a topical antibiotic to avoid the risk of infection.

VENOMOUS SNAKES

Most of the snakes found in Missouri are harmless, and actually very good for the environment (they keep the rodent population down), but there are five species which are venomous. **Venomous** and **poisonous** are oftentimes interchanged when talking about snakes with venom. *Venomous* is the more precise term used when the poison enters the body by injection rather than by being ingested.

The copperhead is the most common venomous snake in Missouri followed by the cottonmouth, and three different rattlesnakes. Venomous snakebites are poisonings, and treating poisonings is our job.

VENOMOUS

PIT
FANGS
VERTICAL PUPILS
SINGLE ROW of scales on the underside of tail

HARMLESS

NO PIT
SMALL ROWS OF TEETH
ROUND PUPILS
TWO ROWS of scales on the underside of tail

TIPS TO AVOID SNAKE BITES

Be aware in areas where snakes likely live: woodpiles, tall grassy areas, bluffs, and rock ledges.

Be cautious while hiking, especially around large rocks or logs. Wear protective shoes or boots. Consider using a walking stick when hiking.

Do not place your hands under rocks or logs; tap the top of the logs before stepping over them.

Wear rubber boots when fishing in streams that may harbor the venomous cottonmouth.

Do not catch or pick up venomous snakes.



FIRST AID FOR VENOMOUS SNAKE BITES:

- DO:**
 - Remain calm.
 - Note time of the bite.
 - Gently wash the bite area with soap and water.

Remove all tight clothing or jewelry which may delay or hide swelling.

Keep the bitten area still, if possible, and raise it to heart level.

Transport the person to the closest hospital.

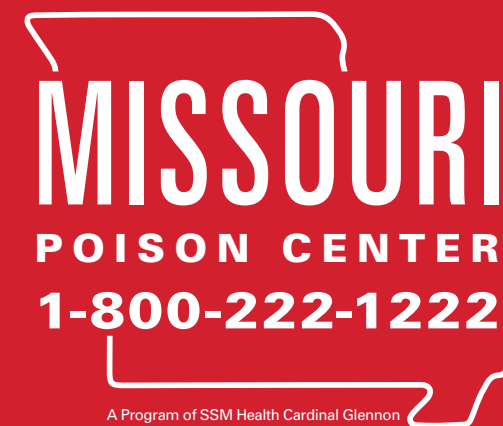
Call the Missouri Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222

- DO NOT:**
 - Do not try to catch or kill the snake. Leave it alone.
 - Do not use ice. Icing causes additional tissue damage.
 - Do not apply a tourniquet. It’s better for the venom to flow through the body than for it to stay in one area.
 - Do not cut over the fang marks and try to suck out the venom. This can worsen the injury.



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AND CONFIDENTIAL. WE HELP PEOPLE OF
ALL AGES IN ALL TYPES OF SITUATIONS.

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