



# Poison HOTLINE

Partnership between Iowa Health System and  
University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics

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### Did you know .....

It is both a myth and a dangerous misconception that any fungus that grows on wood is safe to eat.

A wide variety of mushrooms may be poisonous if eaten. Members of the genus *Amanita* are especially deadly and this species is found in Iowa. Because identification of mushrooms is often difficult, and because some edible species closely resemble some poisonous species, special care must be taken before eating any wild-growing mushroom. Call the ISPCC at 1-800-222-1222 for treatment recommendations for mushroom poisonings.

## Along Came A Spider....

Spiders come in all shapes, sizes and colors. Some live indoors, but most live outdoors. Spiders are timid and will retreat if they can. They will not attempt to bite a human unless provoked or trapped. Only two spider species found in Iowa may be considered poisonous: the black widow (*Lactrodectus*) and the brown recluse (*Loxosceles*). Fortunately, both spiders are rare in Iowa.

Patient complaints of "spider bites" occur much more commonly than actual spider bites. Victims rarely recall feeling the bite or seeing the spider. Diagnosis most commonly is based on the patient's presenting symptoms.

Black Widow spiders are easily identified: the adult female spider is shiny black with a red hourglass marking on the underside of her abdomen. The body is about 0.5 inches long with a spread (including legs) of 1.5 inches. The adult male is half the size of the female and has red or yellow bands or spots on its back. Only bites from females result in toxic effects.

Black Widow bites are initially painful, with pain starting within 30-120 minutes. Within hours, painful cramping and muscle fasciculations occur in the affected extremity.

Black Widow



Brown Recluse



The Brown Recluse's body is only about 3/8 inch long, has long spindly legs, and is tan to straw-brown in color. The characteristic "violin-shaped marking" on the top of the spider may vary in color.

Brown Recluse bites are best known for causing slow healing skin ulcers. The bites typically produce a "bull's eye" lesion, consisting of a blanched ring surrounded by ecchymosis. The lesion can range from 1-5 cm in diameter.

Call **1-800-222-1222** for treatment recommendations specific to Black Widow and Brown Recluse spider bites.

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