

Brown Recluse Spider — Fact and Fiction

Featured in this Issue

Brown Recluse
Spider — Fact and
Fiction

Summer Poison
Prevention Tips

TPC Saves Lives and
Money

Tick Time in TN

Links

Link to Tennessee Poison Center

Serving all 95 Tennessee
counties
www.tnpoisoncenter.org

American Association of Poison Control Centers

www.aapcc.org

UT Extension

[https://utextension.
tennessee.edu](https://utextension.tennessee.edu)



Tennessee Poison Center partners with the University of Tennessee Extension to provide statewide poison prevention education. The UT Extension has some excellent information about poisonous spiders on their website. Also, this information is on the TPC website.

“Few things cause as much fear and anxiety in people as the thought of poisonous spiders. Tennessee is home to many species of spiders; however, only two are poisonous - the black widow and the brown recluse. Both of these species are found in every Tennessee county.

Below are some useful tips for keeping spiders at bay:

- Store clothing in sealed plastic bags or storage boxes.
- Store shoes in plastic shoe boxes.
- Shake clothing and shoes before wearing.
- Move beds away from walls or curtains.
- Remove bed skirts from box springs.
- Do not use bedspreads that touch or come close to the floor.
- Inspect bedding before climbing into bed.
- Seal all cracks and crevices where spiders may enter the home.
- Move firewood away from the home, elevate it off the ground and cover it with plastic.

Brown Recluse Spider

Description: The brown recluse is a shy, retiring spider that does not attack people and usually only bites in response to being injured. This is quite the opposite of what most people think! Most reported bites occur when putting on clothing in which the spider is hiding or rolling on a spider in bed. Most people living in proximity to the spider will never see it, nor be bitten by it. In fact, only 10% of the people bitten by a poisonous spider have a reaction.

The brown recluse is a medium-sized spider. The legs span an area roughly the size of a quarter to a half-dollar. The color of the brown recluse ranges from a light yellowish brown to a dark reddish or chocolate brown, but most are light to medium brown. The second pair of legs is always longer than the remaining pair in both the male and female. Three pairs of eyes are arranged in a semicircle. Since most other spiders have eight eyes, this feature alone can eliminate many specimens suspected of being a brown recluse spider. (continued on page three)



Summer Poison Prevention Tips

During the summer, be aware of poison prevention tips and share them with your family and friends to avoid any poisoning risks as the summer heats up.

- Be sure that everyone in your family can identify poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac. Remember, “leaves of three, let it be.” If someone touches one of these plants, rinse right away with plenty of running water for at least five minutes.
- Use a thermometer when cooking and reheating foods. That will help you to know when they are safe to eat.
- Do not let food sit out at room temperature for more than two hours.
- If a poisonous snake bites you or someone you know, call 1-800-222-1222 right away.
- Unless you are a plant expert, do not pick your own foods to eat in the wild. Only experts can tell poisonous mushrooms from safe mushrooms.

- Be sure to check the label on any insect repellent. Most contain DEET. Do not allow children to apply repellent to themselves. Have an adult do this for them.
- Program the toll-free line for Tennessee Poison Center (1-800-222-1222) into your cell phone and post the number by your phone at home.



Tips courtesy of www.poisonhelp.hrsa.gov

Saving Money for Taxpayers

Tennessee Poison Center (TPC) recently completed a survey of residents who had called TPC in a poison emergency. All of these callers received treatment advice allowing the poisoning to be managed at home.

We asked callers, “What action would you have taken if Tennessee Poison Center were not available?” 68% of the callers who answered the survey replied that they would go to the closest emergency department. Based on health insurance information provided by the caller, it is estimated that Tennessee Poison Center will save taxpayers \$14,874,000 in emergency department fees by managing poisonings at home—this staggering amount is for 2011 only!



Here are a few points to ponder:

- For every \$1 that is invested in poison center services, up to \$16 in total health care dollars are saved.
- TPC prevents unnecessary emergency department and physician office visits. 75% of the poisoning calls to Tennessee Poison Center are safely managed at home under the monitoring of the poison specialist.
- Hospital patients managed with poison center expertise, on average experience shorter hospitalizations—3.5 days versus 6.5 days.

Tick Time in Tennessee

Dr. Saralyn Williams, Attending Toxicologist at TPC, provides the following information regarding tick season in Tennessee:

“With the time of year that brings delicate lightening bugs out at dusk, this warm weather also brings ticks.

Here in the south, tick borne illnesses are certainly in season during the summer months. Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF), Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness (STARI), and Ehrlichiosis are endemic here in TN while Lyme disease is not.

Reducing exposure to these biting arachnids is key. Check yourself and your children each day after being outdoors. This can be particularly difficult on the scalp when the child has long or thick hair. It may be easier to “feel” the tick on the scalp with your fingertips than see them. Don’t forget the areas such as the groin and the backside which may not be as easily visible. If you find an attached tick, remove with fine-tipped tweezers.

http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing_a_tick.html

Using an insect repellent such as DEET may be helpful for ticks but probably works better on those pesky mosquitoes. DEET can be applied directly to the skin as directed on the product label instructions with the following considerations for young children:

- Not recommended for children under 2 months of age.
- Don’t apply to children’s hands. Don’t spray directly onto children’s faces and don’t apply around the eyes or mouth.
- Children 6 months to 2 years should be limited to one application per day
- Children 2-12 years should be limited to 3 applications per day

The maximum concentration used should be 10% or less for children up to 12 years of age. These low concentrations are effective for 2-3 hours. A second application of DEET may be warranted if the child is out of doors for more than 12 hours. After returning indoors, wash the skin with soap and water.

Permethrin is another available product that is used as an insecticide, acaricide (kills ticks and mites), and also considered an insect repellent. Permethrin is a synthetic derivative of natural pyrethrin which comes from chrysanthemums. Permethrin is applied to clothing, mosquito netting, etc, but not the skin when used for this purpose. While topical permethrin has an incredible safety profile in most mammals including humans, it should never be used on cats and is also very toxic to fish.

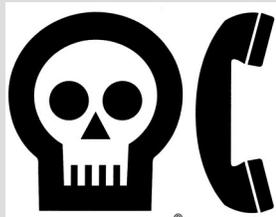
Happy camping!”

(continued from page one)

The most distinguishing characteristic is the violin-shaped marking on the top of the body directly above the legs. The violin-shaped marking is usually much darker than the surrounding areas and may appear lined. Since some other species of spider have a violin-shaped marking, the best identification feature for the brown recluse is a semicircular arrangement of the three pairs of eyes. Contact your county Extension agent to identify a suspected brown recluse spider.

Habitat: Brown recluse spiders prefer sheltered areas with low moisture levels. In homes, they tend to prefer darkened storage areas in closets, garages, basements, attics and cupboards. Since most brown recluse spiders hibernate in the winter (except for those that live indoors), most bites occur between March and October when humans accidentally disturb their habitat: closets, out-buildings or woodpiles.”

If you think that you have a brown recluse spider bite, call your primary care physician.



This newsletter is brought to you by Tennessee Poison Center and was produced with assistance from the American Association of Poison Control Centers and local poison centers around the country.

When you dial 1-800-222-1222, your call is answered by a medical professional with special training in poisoning management. Help is fast, free, confidential, and available 24-hours a day, every day.

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