



INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT: SPIDERS

Spiders are beneficial predators of pests such as mosquitoes and house flies. Most spiders are harmless. The few spiders that might hurt humans, such as black widows, spend most of their time hidden under woodpiles or in crevices. Brown recluse spiders do not live in California.

When are spiders a problem?

Children are very curious, and typically play on the floor or ground, which puts them at a higher risk for rare encounters with spiders. Spiders usually leave people alone unless provoked, and almost all bites blamed on spiders come from mosquitoes, biting flies or fleas.

Spiders cannot transmit diseases. Only a few have jaws strong enough to bite through skin, and these spiders can inject toxin that may cause illness. Certain spider bites can sicken young children due to their small body size and weight. A serious infection, Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), is not a spider bite but looks like one. Only a health care provider can distinguish them.

Characteristics

Spiders are arachnids, close relatives of insects, and have eight legs and two body parts—the head and abdomen.



Black widow spiders are common in California. The female has a shiny black body with a bright orange-red hourglass shape on the bottom of her abdomen. She's usually less than ½ inch long—about the size of your thumbnail.

Male black widow spiders are smaller than females and lighter in color. Their mouthparts are too small to bite humans.

Black widows are most active in the warmer months. They live in dark, warm, dry and sheltered areas such as garages, sheds, wood piles, stone piles and hollow wood stumps. They're found under play structures, in hollow areas of children's toys and under picnic tables and benches, especially in corners.

Other spiders, such as the common house spider, are harmless and often found in corners of a house, basement or a garage where they make their cobwebs.

Habits

Only full-sized black widow females bite humans, and only if threatened or if their web is disturbed. If bitten, the reaction can be mild to painful. Death is very unlikely, but infections are common. If bitten, wash the area with warm water and soap, apply an ice pack and contact a health care provider or poison control center (1-800-8-POISON) immediately.

IPM strategies

Most spiders are beneficial and harmless to humans. Since spiders eat other pests, leave them alone, especially if you find them outdoors. If you need to remove a spider indoors, use an empty plastic container and slide a stiff piece of paper over the container's top.

1 KEEP SPIDERS OUT

- ▶ Install screens.
- ▶ Minimize hiding places and regularly clean cobwebs with a cobweb brush (for example, a "Webster"), or vacuum indoors.
- ▶ Seal cracks in the foundation and openings to keep spiders from entering the building.

2 REMOVE SPIDERS' FOOD, WATER AND SHELTER

- ▶ Change outside light bulbs that attract flying insects that are food for spiders. Yellow light bulbs are slightly less attractive to these insects.
- ▶ Vacuum, dust and sweep regularly.
- ▶ Keep vegetation, especially ivy, at least 12 inches away from the building's foundation.

3 MONITOR

- ▶ Indoors, spiders are commonly found in either very dry or very moist areas, in dark corners and crevices where they make webs. Indoor cobwebs are an indication that spiders are present and where they are hiding.



[IPM strategies continued]

▶ Not every web houses a spider—once a web is abandoned, another spider doesn't move in. Also, check outdoor playground equipment, benches and picnic tables.

4 GET RID OF SPIDERS

▶ Traps and insecticides don't work to manage spiders. Spraying is usually not recommended because it won't kill spiders and leaves residues that may harm children and the environment. Insecticides work only if you are able to directly spray the spider.

▶ A less toxic way to manage spiders is simply to move them outside, vacuum them up, crush them with your shoe or smash them with a rolled up piece of paper.

▷ To remove individual spiders, place a jar over them and slip cardboard underneath to seal off the opening. Then, take the spider outside.

▷ Use a cobweb brush or Webster (an effective cleaning tool which extends to over 5-feet long) to clean ceilings and corners.

ACTION PLAN FOR SPIDERS

WHEN TO TAKE ACTION	NONPESTICIDE PRACTICES	LAST RESORT
<p>▶ When you see spiders in your center.</p>	<p>▶ Keep your center clean.</p> <p>▶ Trap individual spiders in a jar or plastic container and release outside.</p> <p>▶ Vacuum the spiders, cobwebs and egg sacs.</p> <p>▶ Screen windows.</p> <p>▶ Seal cracks and openings.</p>	<p>▶ Consult with a pest management professional (PMP) if spiders are a concern after regularly using a cobweb brush and vacuum cleaner. A PMP can spray spiders directly only as a temporary solution. PMPs can apply dusts containing silica gel and pyrethrins, which may be useful in certain indoor situations.</p>

RESOURCES

University of California Statewide IPM Program: *Spiders*
www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7442.html

Our Water, Our World: Living with Spiders, The Helpful Hunters
www.ourwaterourworld.org/Portals/o/documents/pdf/Spiders%2009.pdf

California Childcare Health Program, University of California, San Francisco School of Nursing • www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org