

Spider bite first aid

Funnel Web

If your child has been bitten by a spider, you are unsure what it is and you are in an area where Funnel Web spiders are around, err on the side of caution and follow this 'funnel web' first aid.

Tips

- ✓ It is vital to be calm and to keep your child as calm as possible, in order to slow the spread of venom.
- ✓ Try not to move your child and preferably get help to come to you.
- ✓ No pressure bandage? Use clothes instead!
- ✓ Don't wash the bite area. In hospital, the staff may swab the bite site for a venom detection kit.

It is also important to not cut the bite area to 'bleed' out the venom or to try and suck it out. This will not help.

- ✓ Download the Australian Bites and Stings App to learn more and learn step by step how to apply a pressure bandage!

Signs of a Funnel Web bite

- + Puncture wounds may be seen
- + Pain at the bite site
- + Swelling and redness
 - + Numbness in or around the mouth
- + Nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain
 - + Excessive saliva and sweating
- + Difficulty breathing
 - + Drowsiness
 - + Fast heart rate
- + Muscle spasms/twitching

First Aid

The pressure immobilisation technique, or pressure bandage, is used to compress the limb, therefore slowing the flow of venom.

- + Immediately: If others are present, have someone phone for medical assistance. If you're unable to phone, send someone for help.
- + As soon as possible, apply a broad pressure bandage from below the bite site, wrapping upward on the affected limb (starting at the fingers or toes, bandaging upward as far as possible)
- + Leave the tips of the fingers or toes unbandaged to allow circulation to be checked
- + Do not remove their pants, simply bandage over the top of the clothing
- + Bandage firmly as for a sprained ankle, but not so tight that circulation is prevented. You should be able to fit one finger under the bandage. Continue to bandage upward from the lower part of the bitten limb
- + Apply the bandage as far up the limb as possible to compress the lymphatic vessels
- + It is vital to now apply a splint. Bind a stick or suitable rigid item over the initial bandage to splint the limb
- + Secure the splint to the bandaged limb by using another bandage, (if you don't have another bandage, use clothing or something similar)
- + It is very important to keep the bitten limb still
- + Bind the splint firmly to as much of the limb as possible to prevent the child from moving their limb. This will help restrict the spread of venom
- + Ensure medical help is on the way

First Aid for bites on the hand or forearm:

- + As soon as possible, apply a broad pressure bandage from the fingers of the affected arm, bandaging upward as far as possible
- + Leave the tips of the fingers unbandaged to allow the victim's circulation to be checked
- + Bind a splint along the forearm

If your child has been bitten and becomes unconscious, follow DRSABCD and keep going with compressions.

Redbacks & other Spiders

Redback spiders get quite a bad rap. In reality, it is highly unlikely that a Redback spider will kill you. However, their bites are very painful and are considered a medical emergency, particularly for children and the elderly.

Tips

- ✓ Antivenom is only given if the person bitten is very symptomatic.
- ✓ First Aid for Redback spider bite does NOT include a pressure bandage, this will only make the pain worse.
- ✓ As for Funnel Web spider bites, don't wash, cut or suck the bite area.

Signs of a Redback bite

- + Nausea
- + Vomiting
- + Abdominal or generalised pain (often severe)
- + Sweating (possibly around bite site)
- + Restlessness
- + Palpitations
- + Weakness
- + Muscle spasm

First Aid

+ For redback bites, apply an ice pack to help with the pain, give analgesia and get medical help.

+ Other spider bites shouldn't cause more than some pain and perhaps some swelling at the bite site.

+ Apply an ice pack to help with the pain, give paracetamol.

+ Usually an ice pack will be enough to treat the bite, however if you are worried or the bite site is very red and/or swollen, seek medical help. This is particularly important if you are unsure of what kind of spider has bitten your child

For more information, visit the Australian Venom Research Unit (www.avru.org).