

Fact Sheet

Bites and Stings



This fact sheet provides information on the basic treatment of venomous bites and stings in Australia. For more information about how to manage bites and stings contact the: **Poisons Information Centre Tel: 13 11 26.**

Spiders

There are many different types of spiders in Australia that can bite people, and these bites can cause a reaction at the site of the bite.

The only poisonous species in Australia are the Red Back Spider and the Funnel Web Spider.



Red Back Spider

The red back spider is found throughout Australia. The female red back spider has a red/ orange stripe on its back while the male is very small, usually with no stripe and is harmless. A red back spider bite may result in pain, redness and sweating at the bite site

Basic treatment:

- Wash the area and keep it clean.
- Seek advice from the Poisons Information Centre or your local doctor.
- If severe pain occurs, the patient needs to be taken to the nearest hospital.



Funnel Web Spider

This spider is large and black. A bite from this spider can be very dangerous. A bite will usually cause severe pain, sweating, nausea and vomiting, difficulty in breathing, muscle twitching and confusion.

Basic treatment:

- Apply a very firm bandage around the bite and then bandage the whole limb.
- Use a splint to keep the whole limb still (that is, immobilise the affected limb).
- Call an ambulance (000) to take the person to the nearest hospital.

Unknown Spider

If possible keep the spider for identification. A bite may cause pain.

Basic treatment:

- Wash the area and keep it clean.
- Applying ice may relieve pain.
- Seek advice from the Poisons Information Centre or your local doctor.

Ticks

Common bush ticks or scrub ticks are often found on people. Ticks bury themselves in the skin. Some ticks release a poison into the blood. Symptoms may include headache, blurred vision and weak limbs. These symptoms may start a few days after a tick bite.

Basic treatment:

- Use a pair of tweezers to remove the tick. Hold the tick firmly as close to the skin as possible, and pull, ensuring that the whole tick is removed at the one time seek medical advice if you are not sure that the whole tick has been removed, or if the person is unwell.

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Scorpions and centipedes

In Australia these are not poisonous. However, a painful, itchy swelling may occur.

Basic treatment:

- Apply a cold compress to relieve the pain.
- Seek medical advice.

Bees

A bee sting can cause pain and/or swelling. The swelling may be worse the next day. Some people may have an allergic reaction to the sting, and may have a rash, vomiting, may collapse or have difficulty in breathing. If this happens, urgent medical attention is needed.

Basic treatment:

- Remove the sting.
- Apply ice to reduce the swelling and to ease the pain (do not apply ice to the eye area).
- Seek medical attention straight away if an allergic reaction occurs.
- If a person has been stung more than five times they should be taken to hospital.

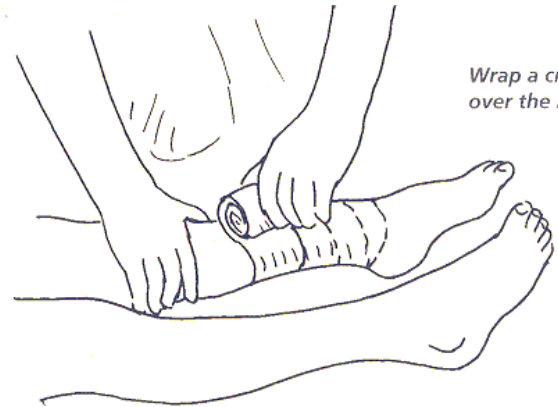
Snakes

There are many venomous snakes in Australia. Most bites do not result in death. Snakebites may cause headache, vomiting, weakness, blurred vision or dizziness.

Basic treatment:

- Apply a broad, firm bandage around the limb to cover the bite immediately. If the bite is not on a limb apply firm local pressure.
- Keep the limb as still as possible. Make a splint made out of any firm object.
- Keep the person still and do not move them from their position.

- Try to notice the colour and markings on the snake but do not try to handle it. DO NOT wash the bitten area as the venom on the skin may be used to identify the snake.



Wrap a crepe bandage over the bitten area.

Blue Bottles

Most stings are painful. Allergic reactions are possible. A rash may occur. Blue bottle stings leave a whip-like, red, wavy line on the skin from the tentacle.

Basic treatment:

- Clear away the tentacles.
- Immerse in hot water for 20 minutes for pain relief. First check that the water temperature is not too hot.
- Seek medical advice if pain continues.

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Blue-ringed octopus



The blue-ringed octopus bite is very poisonous. A bite can cause paralysis, and the person may stop breathing.

Basic treatment:

- Apply a firm bandage to the bite, and the whole limb. Apply firm pressure if the bite is not on a limb.
- Take the patient to a hospital as quickly as possible.
- If the person stops breathing, they will need cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

First aid courses

It is very important to know what to do in an emergency. First aid can save lives and prevent serious injuries. For information about first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) courses in your local area contact:

- Australian Red Cross Society
Tel: (02) 9229 4111
- St John Ambulance
Tel: (02) 9212 1088.

Remember

- Keep a first aid kit at home and in the car.
- Place the 24 hour telephone number of the Poisons Information Centre on your phone (13 11 26).

This fact sheet is for education purposes only.
Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for your child.

This document was reviewed on Friday 24th October 2008.

the
children's
hospital at Westmead

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