



## **AUSTRALIAN RESUSCITATION COUNCIL**

### **GUIDELINE 8.9.3**

#### **ENVENOMATION - SPIDER BITE**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

All spiders have fangs and venom sacs, but only the Funnel-web spiders are an immediate threat to life in Australia. If symptoms or signs develop from any spider bite, transport the victim to hospital. It is reasonable to save the spider for identification if this can be done safely, although it is not necessary for effective management.

##### **FUNNEL-WEB SPIDER**

Any bite from a large (3cm body length), dark spider, especially in the Sydney or northern NSW area, should be considered as a dangerous bite and immediate treatment given.

##### **RECOGNITION**

Symptoms and signs may include:

- pain at the bite site, but little local reaction
- tingling around the mouth
- profuse sweating
- copious secretion of saliva
- abdominal pain
- confusion leading to coma
- muscular twitching
- breathing difficulty.

##### **Note:**

Dangerous effects may occur within 10 minutes.

##### **MANAGEMENT**

The rescuer should:

- keep the victim at rest, reassured and under constant observation
- commence resuscitation if necessary, following the Australian Resuscitation Council Basic Life Support Flow Chart Guideline 7
- apply Pressure Immobilisation immediately (see Guideline 8.9.1)
- transport the victim to a medical facility, preferably by ambulance.

##### **Note:**

Antivenom is available for Funnel-web spider envenomation.

## **RED-BACK SPIDER**

This spider (one cm body length) has a characteristic red, orange or pale stripe on its back. A bite may threaten the life of a child, but is rarely serious for an adult.

### **RECOGNITION**

Symptoms and signs may include:

- immediate pain at the bite site which becomes hot, red and swollen
- intense local pain which increases and spreads
- nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain
- profuse sweating, especially at the bite site
- swollen tender glands in the groin or axilla of the envenomed limb.

#### **Note:**

Local pain occurs rapidly after the bite, but the venom acts slowly so a serious illness is unlikely in under 3 hours.

### **MANAGEMENT**

The rescuer should:

- keep the victim under constant observation
- apply an ice compress to lessen the pain
- transport the victim to a medical facility, preferably by ambulance.

#### **Note:**

The Pressure Immobilisation Technique is **not** used because the venom acts slowly and any attempt to retard its movement tends to increase local pain. Antivenom is available for Red-back spider envenomation.

## **OTHER AUSTRALIAN SPIDER BITES**

The white tailed spider and a recluse spider have been implicated in cases of severe local tissue destruction. While local effects may be severe, the Pressure Immobilisation Technique should **not** be used.

### **FURTHER READING**

ARC Guideline 7 Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

ARC Guideline 8.9.1. Envenomation - Pressure Immobilisation Technique