

Black Widow Spiders

QUICK STATS:



Color:

Black abdomen with a red hourglass marking on back



Shape:

Spherical



Size:

1½ – 1¾ inches long



Region:

Various species found throughout the U.S.



Black Widow Spiders



Latrodectus spp.

OVERVIEW:

This spider gets its name from the popular belief that the female eats the male after mating, although this rarely happens in nature. Black widow spiders are most recognized for the red hourglass shape under their abdomen.

HABITS:

Outside, black widows commonly live in protected areas such as under stones or decks and in firewood piles, tree stumps and shrubs. They are also commonly found in barns, outhouses, sheds and barrels. Indoors, black widows prefer the undisturbed and cluttered areas of garages, basements and crawl spaces. Black widows spin irregular webs, which they usually build at night.

THREATS:

The biggest threat posed by black widow spiders is their bite. Males are not of concern as they lack potent venom and rarely bite, but females are known to be especially aggressive after laying, and when guarding, eggs. Pain is usually immediate, but black widow bites are not always felt. In this case, the only reliable evidence is a slight swelling with two tiny fang marks. Symptoms of a black widow bite include fever, increased blood pressure, sweating and nausea.

PREVENTION:

- Reduce clutter in basements and garages to eliminate hiding spots.
- Wear heavy gloves when moving items that have been stored for a long period of time.
- Inspect shoes before wearing them, as they are a frequent spider hiding spot.
- Store firewood at least twenty feet from the home and five inches off the ground.
- If you are bitten by a black widow, seek prompt medical attention.
- If you suspect you have a black widow infestation, contact a licensed pest professional.

DID YOU KNOW? Black widow spiders...

- hang upside-down in their webs.
- are poisonous when ingested during the first 18 days of their life.
- disperse from the egg sac by spinning silk threads and floating out on the breeze like kites, in a practice called “ballooning.”

For more information, visit PESTWORLD.org

