



What to do if you are bitten

- If you are unlucky enough to get bitten by a spider, stay calm - anxiety or panicky reactions are likely to be more harmful than the bite
- If you do get significant swelling, cramps, nausea or other symptoms you should seek immediate medical advice – just to be on the safe side
- Keep the area around the bite clean and do not scratch the bite (or any insect bite/scratch/puncture wound) as this can cause a bacterial infection. Serious infections develop over days not hours, well beyond the timescale for the effects of neurotoxins
- If you think a spider has bitten you and you can see it, try to catch it in a container – be careful not to be bitten again. If you then get any symptoms, experts can check the identity. Several types of medium to large spiders, less toxic than Noble false-widow, regularly occur in and around houses and the chances are it will be one of these, especially away from south England
- The above advice is particularly pertinent if handling goods recently imported from tropical areas, but even then bites from even the most venomous species are very unlikely and death or long-term injury from such a bite is exceedingly rare

Spotting dubious ‘killer spider’ scare stories in the media

No spider - it attacked at night, no spider seen – spiders bite when trapped or squeezed, when you are asleep you are generally still and unlikely to harass a spider - plays on vampire fears.

‘Antibiotic prescription’ – the doctors clearly thought it was a bacteria infection or they would have used anti-venom.

‘Killer’ etc. – spiders leaping, running at and being vicious towards people – only happens in the films.

‘Cutting out venom’ – this is a treatment necrosis, usually caused by a bacterial infection.

Late response – if the symptoms are worse on day two than on day one then venom is unlikely to be the cause – venom has evolved to act quickly.

Unidentified spider picture – journalist has not bothered to ask an expert to help name the spider in the photo.

‘False widow’ – unspecific references to ‘false-widows’ there are several species of false widow in Britain, including the Common false-widow (*Steatoda bipunctata*) that lives around human settlements for thousands of years and has never caused anyone any problems (and the most likely to be seen in the north).

‘A nest of spiders’ – spiders in the UK do not live in ‘nests’, although there are some amazing species in the tropical jungles that do cooperate with each other to build large communal webs