

HOW TO DEAL WITH A TARANTULA

Tarantulas are usually not hostile and do not have fatal bites. However, their bites can cause dangerous allergic reactions in some individuals and can be extremely painful, so take care when one crawls on or near you.

1 Find something you can use to brush the tarantula off of you or away from you.

A small stick, rolled newspaper or magazine, or glove works well. Most tarantulas are very skittish, and as soon as you poke them, they will leave in great haste. It is safer to remove the tarantula using an implement than using your bare hand.

2 If the tarantula is on you and cannot be brushed off, stand up carefully and bounce up and down gently.

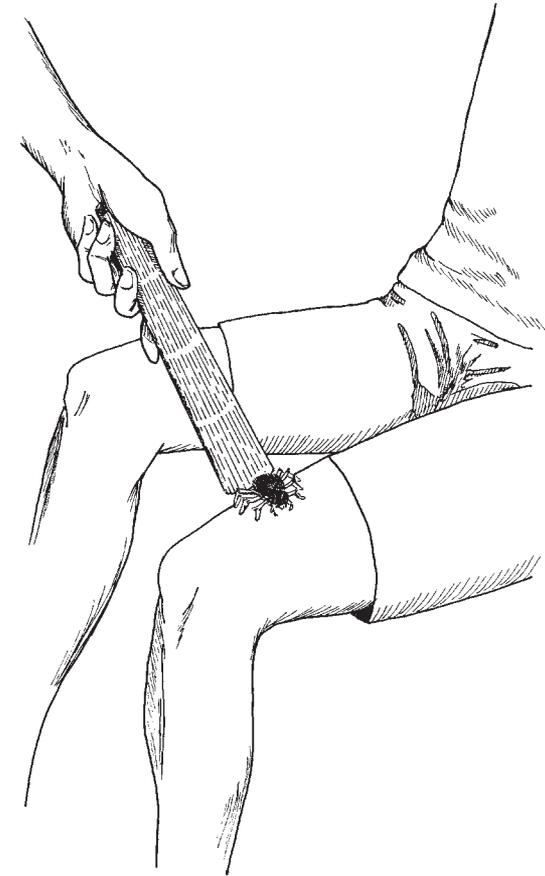
The tarantula should fall off or skitter away.

HOW TO TREAT A BITE

1 Do not panic if you are bitten.

The vast majority of tarantulas give “dry” bites (which look like two pin pricks) first, and then a second bite to inject venom. Avoid *Pterinochilus* and *Heteroscodra*, two species of “baboon spiders” in Africa, and *Poecilothera*, “ornamental tarantulas” in southern Asia, which deliver potent bites.

Use a rolled-up magazine or newspaper or another item to brush the tarantula off.



2 **Treat a dry bite like any other small puncture wound: use an antiseptic to clean it out, and bandage the site quickly.**

3 **Observe the area around the bite carefully.**

A few varieties of tarantula may inject venom that can cause swelling and redness in the area around the bite, as well as pain and tenderness lasting 2 to 6 hours. If these symptoms persist for longer than 12 hours, or if other, more serious symptoms develop, seek medical attention. Unless absolutely necessary, do not drive a vehicle.

4 **Treat excessive swelling with antihistamines.**

The allergic reaction can be eased with antihistamines, although they are usually slow acting. If symptoms such as extreme flushing in the face, blurred vision, dizziness, profuse swelling around the face or eyes, or restricted breathing occur, epinephrine may be necessary.

5 **Watch closely for complications.**

While the bite itself is probably not life-threatening, it can become infected, and this is the greatest danger if you are bitten. Seek immediate medical attention if you see signs of tetanus (muscle stiffness, spasm, fever, convulsions, difficulty swallowing, irregular heartbeat, trouble breathing), tularemia (fever, nausea, swollen lymph nodes, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea), or septicemia (spiking fever and chills, rapid breathing, shock, disorientation, inability to urinate, swollen limbs, blue lips and fingernails).

Be Aware

- Tarantulas are basically just big spiders. Few will bite you unless you try to pick them up.
- Tarantulas are not carriers of any known disease that affects humans or other vertebrates. Tetanus, tularemia, and other diseases that may follow a tarantula bite are most likely the result of post-bite contamination due to unclean environmental conditions. (See step 5.)
- Tarantulas can be found in North America, west of the Mississippi River; in South America; and in warm climates throughout the world. Their habitats vary, and include deep deserts, grassy plains, scrub forests, and rainforests. Most live in burrows, though a few species prefer trees and areas around the base or under the roof of human dwellings.
- Tarantulas are mostly nocturnal and are difficult to notice unless you are searching for them. Most people encounter adult males, which wander during daylight hours looking for female mates.
- Never try to pick up a tarantula. Tarantulas have tough bristles on the tops of their abdomens which can irritate the skin. These come loose easily and float freely through the air. They are shaped like small harpoons with barbed tips and may penetrate the skin and cause a rash or hives.