First aid fact sheet

Spider bites

Signs & symptoms

General symptoms
• sharp pain at bite site
• profuse sweating
• nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain.

Additional symptoms of a Funnel-Web / Mouse spider bite
• copious secretion of saliva
• muscular twitching
• breathing difficulty
• small hairs stand on end
• numbness around mouth
• copious tears
• disorientation
• fast pulse
• markedly increased blood pressure
• confusion leading to unconsciousness.

Additional symptoms of a Red-back spider bite
• intense local pain which increases and spreads
• small hairs stand on end
• patchy sweating
• headache
• muscle weakness or spasms.

Possible signs and symptoms of other spider bites
• burning sensation
• swelling
• blistering.

What to do

First aid for Funnel-web / Mouse spider: pressure bandage & immobilise

1 Follow DRSABCD.
2 Call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance.
3 Lie the patient down and ask them to keep still. Reassure the patient.
4 If on a limb, apply an elasticised roller bandage (10–15 cm wide) over the bite site as soon as possible.
5 Apply a further elasticised roller bandage (10–15 cm wide), starting just above the fingers or toes and moving upwards on the bitten limb as far as can be reached.
• Apply the bandage as firmly as possible to the limb. You should be unable to easily slide a finger between the bandage and the skin.
6 Immobilise the bandaged limb using splints.
7 Write down the time of the bite and when the bandage was applied. If possible, mark the location of the bite site (if known) on the skin with a pen, or photograph the site. Do not wash venom off the skin or clothes because it can assist identification.
8 Stay with the patient until medical aid arrives.

First aid for Red-back and other spider bites

1 Wash the injured site with soap and water.
2 Apply a cold pack to the bitten or stung area for 15 minutes and reapply if pain continues.
3 Seek medical attention if the patient develops severe symptoms.

In a medical emergency call Triple Zero (000)

DRSABCD Danger ► Response ► Send for help ► Airway ► Breathing ► CPR ► Defibrillation

You could save a life with first aid training • www.stjohn.org.au • 1300 360 455

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