



Photo: University of Nebraska

Black Widow Spider

Neurotoxic venom affects the neuromuscular junctions, and bite symptoms involving this type of venom are:

- severe pain in the chest and abdomen
- anxiety, raised blood pressure
- breathing difficulties and heart palpitations
- nausea and vomiting
- sweating, excessive salivation and watery eyes
- the body temperature could either fall or rise above normal and the blood pressure may rise with an increased pulse rate

The main signs and symptoms of Latrodectism (Black Widow Spider envenomation):

- sharp burning pain at the site
- pain spreads to lymph nodes within 15 minutes
- severe muscle pain and cramps within an hour, resulting in tightness in the chest and difficulty with walking
- anxiety, sweating, fever, slurred speech, nausea and headaches.

When someone is bitten:

- Keep the culprit if possible. An identification of the spider would be necessary to determine the appropriate treatment, if any.
- Keep the patient or the affected part as motionless as possible. However, this might not be practical if one is out in the wild. It is then preferable to get to help as soon as possible even if the patient has to walk.
- Eating, drinking and smoking should be avoided.
- Call for medical assistance
- Keep the patient on his/her back with feet raised above the rest of the body. Cover with a blanket and keep the head to one side in case of vomiting
- Loosen tight clothing
- Apply artificial respiration should breathing stop