



Media Contact: Susan Tellem
stellem@tellem.com
310 313-3444

California Poison Control Offers Tips about Spider Bites

June 30, 2011 – San Francisco, CA – California Poison Control System (CPCS)

(<http://www.calpoison.org>) suggests being on the lookout for spiders which are increasingly active during the summer when the temperature rises. Spider bites can result in small puncture wounds, pain, redness, itching and swelling that can last a couple of days. Most bites occur between the months of April and October and are usually not serious.

People thinking that they have been bitten by a spider is far more common than actual spider bites, and many “bites” are actually bacterial skin infections. An expanding red painful area on the skin may be a staph infection and should be examined by a physician.

“Only a few spider species have fangs which can penetrate human skin and be worrisome to people. But by following some precautions, people can minimize the chance of being bitten,” says Dr. Richard Geller, medical director for the CPCS. He added that, “Most spiders are killed only because they scare people, not because they are actually dangerous to humans. Spiders generally prefer to live in undisturbed areas where they can catch insects in peace.”

In California, most spider bites of any significance are caused by the female black widow (Click this link to see a black widow <http://bit.ly/4oZvxJ>). The venom is dangerous even when baby spiders hatch. Black widows establish non-symmetrical webs in garages, closets, corners of patio furniture, as well as outdoors. They are usually not aggressive, so most bites occur because a spider is trapped or unintentionally touched

Dr. Geller suggested the following spider bite prevention tips:



- Check your bed thoroughly before climbing in; more so if the bed has not been slept in for a while.
- Keep cribs and beds as far from the wall as possible.
- Shake all clothes thoroughly before wearing them.
- Always put on gloves and long-sleeved shirts when going through or emptying closets, boxes or containers that have sat alone for a while.
- Turn your shoes over and shake them out before putting them on.
- Teach children to respect spiders and to find an adult if they see one.

Dr. Geller said that, "The biggest problem with black widow spiders is pain. If pain is increasingly severe, seek medical attention, as effective medicines are available." The symptoms of a black widow spider bite include minimal redness at the bite site, and gradually increasing pain over several hours after envenomation (venom is injected). A bite on the hand or arm can cause chest pain, and bites to the lower extremities can cause abdominal pain. Not all black widow bites need medical attention. Reasons to go to the doctor after a spider bite include:

- Discomfort which is increasingly severe.
- Spreading local redness accompanied by pain.
- Any drainage from a bite site.

About CPCS

You can learn more about a variety of poison issues by following CPCS on Facebook at <http://on.fb.me/iS6S7J> and on Twitter @poisoninfo. Sign up for weekly safety text messages to your cell phone by texting TIPS to 69866; and download a free iPhone app, *Choose Your Poison*, at <http://bit.ly/gg9vfG>. CPCS is dedicated to providing residents with the most up-to-date information and 24-hour help in case of poisoning. In case of an accidental poisoning, consumers should immediately call 1-800-222-1222 for advice. Pharmacists, nurses, physician-toxicologists and poison information providers are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to help. In most cases, a poison exposure can be safely managed in your home, avoiding a call to



911 or a visit to a crowded hospital emergency room. Many parents think about contacting the poison control services only in case of an emergency, but experts are available to answer questions any time.