



# BLACK WIDOWS

**Many spiders are common around the home. Although sometimes undesired, they help by eating harmful insects.**

Female Black Widow

There are many different types of spiders in Santa Clara County. All will bite if threatened. However, very few are dangerous to people. One of these is the Western Black Widow (*Latrodectus hesperus*).

**The female has a half inch long body with long legs and is shiny black with red hourglass underneath. Males and young widows are smaller and brown, tan, or white.**

## Bite Symptoms

May include one or more:

- Mild to severe pain and fever
- Muscle spasms (rigid stomach muscles)
- Profuse sweating
- Increased blood pressure
- Difficulty breathing and restlessness

## Black Widow Look-alikes and Other Potentially Dangerous Spiders

False widows (*Steatoda grossa*) have a body shape similar to Black Widows but are brown in color. Their venom is mild.

Brown recluses (*Loxosceles* spp.) are smaller (1/2 inch total body) and brown and are not found in Santa Clara county.

Tarantulas (*Aphonopelma* spp.) are found in the wild areas of Santa Clara county. They are large, hairy, and very shy and unlikely to bite. When provoked their bites are similar to bee stings in severity.

## Habitat

- Under buildings
- Under rocks, in woodpiles, and in dense vegetation
- Inside garages and storage sheds
- Under patio furniture and picnic tables
- Dark hidden corners and small crevices

Male Black Widow



False Widow



Brown recluse



Tarantula



## First Aid

It is possible that without treatment, symptoms may go away in a few days. However, small children, the elderly, and persons with health problems may have more severe symptoms and should seek medical attention.

A cold pack may lessen the pain.

## Prevention

- Regularly dust and vacuum areas where spiders may be found
- Shake out clothes, shoes, and blankets that have been stored before use
- Seal cracks in foundations, windows, and doors
- Clean up clutter in the garage and yard
- Be alert when moving wood from the woodpile

