

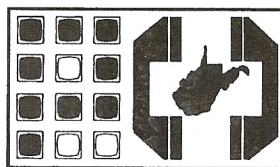
## Caterpillars

Caterpillar is the common name for the larva of a moth or butterfly. The majority of caterpillars are not irritating. Since it is difficult for most people to identify the irritative species of caterpillars, it is advisable not to pick these creatures up with bare hands. The most common effects are pain, redness, and swelling in the area of the sting. The extent of the symptoms will depend on the individual's sensitivity, the type of caterpillar, the types of hairs, and the conditions of exposure. Exposure may be from the caterpillar, airborne hairs, silken threads, or shed skins.

**First Aid** The first treatment should be washing the area with running water to remove the spicules. Do not scratch or rub the area as this may cause the hairs to penetrate deeper into the skin. Sometimes the spines are large enough to be seen with a magnifying glass and can be removed with tweezers.

Occasionally the use of adhesive tape may aid in removal of the spines. Antihistamines can be used to relieve some of the local symptoms.

**The West Virginia Poison Center (WVPC) provides comprehensive emergency poison information, prevention, and educational resources to West Virginians 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Each call to the poison center is answered by a specialist in Poison information who is specially trained in the management of poisoning emergencies. The WVPC offers assessment and emergency treatment advice on accidental exposures to medications and household substances, plant ingestions; snake, spider and other insect bites and stings, chemical spills, occupational exposures, and drug overdoses.**



**WEST  
VIRGINIA  
POISON  
CENTER**

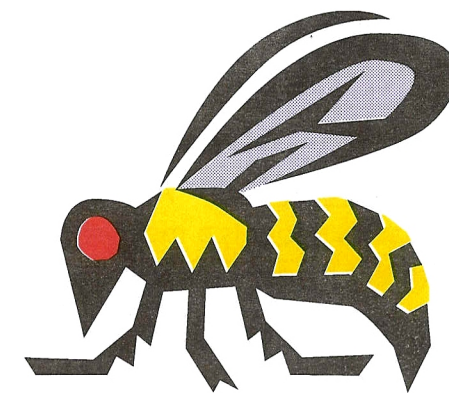
**1-800-222-1222**

For more information on poison safety or to order educational materials, call the Administrative Office at (304) 347-1212 or visit our website at <http://www.wvpoisoncenter.org>

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# *Bites and Stings*

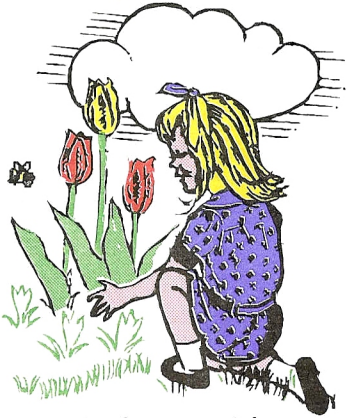
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***The West Virginia Poison Center  
Emergency Line  
1-800-222-1222***

## *Bites and Stings*

Bites and stings usually occur during the warmer months, when the weather beckons most of us outdoors and increases our



exposure to bees, spiders, and caterpillars. These insects use poisonous venom as a means to capture prey or to defend themselves or nesting areas. The West Virginia Poison Center is available 24 hours a day to help you if a bite or sting occurs.

### **Spiders**

**Black Widow** — A mature female black widow is a more significant threat than the smaller, brown male. The mature female is a globe shaped, shiny, black spider with a red or orange “hourglass” marking on the underside of her abdomen. These spiders are nocturnal and are commonly found in buildings, wood piles and stone walls. They also inhabit dark, moist areas, such as crawl spaces and outside privies.

Its bite may be painless or painful with redness and warmth at the site. Within the first two hours symptoms may include: cramping and rigidity in the chest, abdomen and muscles, which may become severe. These symptoms may be followed by nausea, vomiting, headache, anxiety, increased blood pressure, reduced heart rate, and/or shock. **First Aid** Clean the area with soapy water. Call the Poison Center for further recommendations.

**Brown Recluse Spider** — This spider is most common to the southern states, but occasionally “finds” its way northward into West Virginia. The brown recluse or “fiddleback spider” is small, about one half inch long, has an oval body, and has a dark violin-shaped marking on its back. This timid spider generally hides in closets, old storage boxes and trunks, crawl spaces in homes, and in stored clothing. Outdoors, it will be found under rocks and in abandoned buildings. Its bite will initially burn and itch, but in some cases will cause no symptoms. A small red bump will appear within 2-10 hours. The bite of this spider may develop into a bulls-eye or halo shape, with a blister in the center. The area in and around the bite mark becomes dark red or blackish-blue. First Aid Wash the bite area with soapy water. Call the Poison Center for further recommendations.

## **Bees, and Wasps**

Bees and wasps are found throughout the state of West Virginia. Bees and wasps will usually avoid contact with humans unless threatened. When one of these fly close, don’t swat it away. A slow quiet retreat out of harms way is the best move. Avoid wearing bright colors, clothing with flower patterns, and heavily scented perfumes and hair sprays, which can attract bees and wasps. If you are stung the area of the sting may become red, swollen, painful and possibly itchy. Bees can leave their barbed stinger inside its victim; wasps do not leave their stinger behind.

**First Aid** Remove stinger by scraping a card across the wound (DO NOT SQUEEZE.) Wash area with soapy water. Apply a cold compress to control swelling. Take analgesics for pain and an antihistamine as needed for minor itching and swelling. If the person stung has a history of allergic reaction to stings, if severe swelling, or difficulty breathing occurs, or if there are multiple bee or wasp stings, seek medical care immediately.

