Please call 911 if you think you have a medical emergency.

Brown Recluse Bite Treatment

Self-Care at Home

Home first aid care is simple. This self-care should not replace a visit to your doctor or emergency department.

Do these techniques:

- Apply ice to decrease pain and swelling.
- Elevate area if possible above the level of your heart.
- Wash the area thoroughly with cool water and mild soap.
- Avoid any strenuous activity because this can spread the spider's venom in your skin.
- Use acetaminophen for pain relief.

Don't do these techniques:

- Do not place any heat to the area. This will accelerate tissue destruction.
- Do not apply any steroid creams to the area such as hydrocortisone cream.
- Do not attempt to remove the spider venom with suction devices or cut out the affected tissue.
- Do not apply electricity to the area. Anecdotal reports of high voltage electrotherapy from common stun guns have never been shown to be effective in any scientific studies. This can also cause secondary burns and deepen tissue destruction.

Medical Treatment

- After initial evaluation, your doctor may provide the following treatment:
  - Tetanus immunization
  - Pain medication
  - Antibiotics
  - Antihistamines such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) for itch relief

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• There is no antivenom available in the United States to counteract the poisonous venom of the brown recluse spider. Controversial therapies include steroids and the drug dapsone (Avlosulfon). These are often reserved for people with severe systemic disease (such as certain types of anemia, blood clotting problems, and kidney failure). The therapies have little proven benefit.
• You will follow-up with your doctor because most wounds will need to be checked daily for at least 3-4 days. Necrotic lesions will need close follow-up. The doctor may carefully remove dead tissue in necrotic areas to reduce secondary bacterial infections.


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