



Photo courtesy University of Nebraska Department. of Entomology

Creepy, Crawly Spiders



Do you run from the room screaming when you see a spider? Or do you look at them and their webs with wonder? Spiders are both amazing and creepy. With Halloween coming up soon, The Mini Page learned more about the awesome spider.

Are spiders insects?

Spiders are in a group called **arachnids** (uh-RAK-nids). Ticks, mites and scorpions belong to the same class.

Although spiders look a lot like insects, they are not insects. Here are some differences:

- Spiders:**

 - have eight legs
 - have two body sections
 - spin silk
 - have glands filled with venom
- 

Insects:

 - have six legs
 - have three body sections
 - Most have wings and antennae.

Importance of spiders

Spiders eat billions of insects. They are important in controlling insects that may harm crops. They also help protect human health by capturing and eating disease-spreading insects such as houseflies.

Super strong silk

Spider silk is one of the strongest materials on Earth. One strand of spider silk is stronger than the same size strand of steel. But the silk is also **flexible**, or able to

be easily shaped. Spider silk was once used to make bulletproof vests.

Spider silk starts as a liquid inside **glands**, or special organs, in the spider's body. When the liquid silk comes in contact with air, it hardens.

A spider usually has four **spinnerets**, or organs that produce silk, at the tip of its abdomen. As the spider moves the spinnerets, they weave the silk together, much like people weave threads.

Spiders can change the size, strength, thickness, stretchiness and stickiness of their silk. Along with webs, spiders can spin protective covers for their egg sacs.



photo by Jason7825

The spinneret of an Australian garden orb weaver spider



photo by Steenrich91



Experts list only two types of spiders as poisonous to humans in America: the black widow and the brown recluse. The black widow spider (left) comes in two varieties — the western black widow and northern black widow. If you are bitten by one of these spiders, you should see a doctor right away. Be sure to keep the spider so it can be identified.

Venom

Venom is poison produced by an animal. Spider venom **paralyzes** its prey, or makes it unable to move.

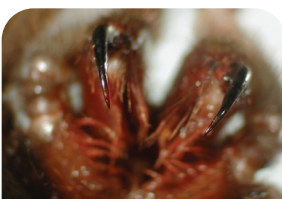


photo © Ben Smith

The fangs of a tarantula

The venom also **digests** the prey, or breaks it down into a liquid. Spiders can eat only liquids. When the venom has turned the prey to liquid, the spiders suck it into their stomachs.

Spiders' venom is in their large jaws. At the tip of each jaw is a sharp, movable fang. When the spider bites an insect, the jaws squeeze the insect, and venom flows through an opening in the spider's fangs.

Spiders eat only live insects. Once its venom has paralyzed the prey, the spider can keep its meal alive until it's done eating.

Being careful

Most spiders are too small to break human skin and are not dangerous to us. But even spiders with weak venom can still cause serious reactions in people. Spider bites can cause a high fever, body aches, and some pain or swelling where the person was bitten. When you see a spider or a spider web, don't put your hands on it. Spiders would rather run away than bite you. They usually bite humans only if they are rolled on or pinched against someone's skin.

Resources

On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPspiders
- bit.ly/MPspiders2

At the library:


- "Spiders" by Rebecca Pettiford



Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of spiders are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

ARACHNID, DIGEST, EIGHT, FANGS, FLEXIBLE, GLAND, HALLOWEEN, INSECT, JAWS, PARALYZE, POISONOUS, PREY, SILK, SPIDER, SPINNERET, STRONG, VENOM, WEAVE, WEB.



S	M	S	S	T	R	O	N	G	Q	S	V	T	S	G
W	S	U	O	N	O	S	I	O	P	Y	Z	P	W	E
A	E	W	T	E	S	I	T	S	E	G	I	D	Z	L
J	I	E	S	E	D	Y	N	S	F	N	T	Y	U	B
M	G	A	P	W	P	N	I	S	N	S	L	M	I	I
F	H	V	I	O	X	L	A	E	E	A	G	O	M	X
Y	T	E	D	L	K	B	R	L	R	C	R	N	Q	E
U	E	B	E	L	J	E	Q	A	G	V	T	E	A	L
R	X	R	R	A	T	W	P	K	W	O	K	V	J	F
E	D	K	P	H	D	I	N	H	C	A	R	A	X	O

Cook's Corner

Buffalo Burgers


You'll need:

- 1 pound ground buffalo (bison) meat*
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon dried chopped onion flakes
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

What to do:

1. Combine meat, spices and Worcestershire sauce in a large bowl.
2. Divide evenly to make 4 equal portions.
3. Flatten meat and shape into patties. Make a thumb imprint in the middle to cook evenly.
4. Grill burgers on stovetop grill or outside grill.
5. Serve with buns and desired condiments.

* You can substitute ground beef if you can't find buffalo meat.



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

1. Threads of old spider-webs with dirt and dust (7-letter plural noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □

2. Very fast; rapid; speedy in moving (5-letter adjective)

□ □ □ □ □

3. Parts of the body used for walking or running (4-letter plural noun)


□ □ □ □

4. Filled with fear or extreme dislike of something (6-letter adjective)

□ □ □ □ □ □

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Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blanks.

Answers: Cobwebs, Quick, Legs, Afraid.

1. Amy saw many _____ in corners of the rarely used barn.

2. Rafe saw a _____ spider race across the web to eat a fly.

3. This story says most spiders have eight black _____.


4. The three girls agree they are _____ of large spiders.

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Mini Jokes

Sydney: Why did the spider buy a car?

Sharise: So he could take it for a spin!



Eco Note



A new study finds that the COVID-19 virus is now widespread among wildlife in the United States, including such backyard animals as rabbits, mice and bats. Virginia Tech researchers say the virus was most prevalent among wildlife near hiking trails and in highly trafficked public areas, suggesting the virus passed from humans to wildlife in some casual way. In one of the animals tested, the virus had mutated to a strain not seen in humans before. But the scientists stressed there is no evidence of the virus being transmitted from animals to humans.


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For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about spiders and other creepy-crawlies.


Teachers:

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