



Creepy, Crawly Spiders



Photo courtesy University of Nebraska Department of Entomology

Mini Fact:

The Carolina wolf spider looks scary, but it is not dangerous to humans.

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. To celebrate Halloween, The Mini Page talked to an **entomologist** (en-tuh-MAH-luh-jist), an expert about insects and spiders, to find out 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.



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 they are not dangerous to humans.

But many nonpoisonous spiders 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, treat it with respect. 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.



Black widow



Brown recluse

Experts list only two types of spiders as poisonous to humans in America: the black widow and the brown recluse. The black widow spider has two poisonous cousins — 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.

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 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.



photo by Jason7825

The spinneret of an Australian garden orb weaver spider

A spider usually has four **spinnerets**, or organs the silk comes out of, 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.

Resources



On the Web:

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

At the library:

- "Spiders: 101 Super Fun Facts and Amazing Pictures" by Janet Evans

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Try 'n' Find

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



ARACHNID, BITE, DIGEST,
EGGS, ENTOMOLOGIST,
FANGS, FLEXIBLE,
GLAND, INSECT, LEGS,
PARALYZE, POISONOUS,
SILK, SPIDER,
SPINNERET, STRONG,
VENOM, WEAVE, WEB.

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

Cook's Corner

Buffalo Burgers

You'll need:

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

What to do:

1. Combine meat, spices and Worcestershire sauce in a large bowl.
2. Divide evenly to make 4 burger patties.
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.

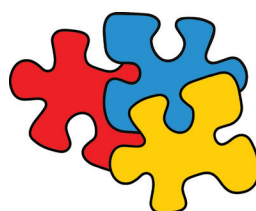
*You can substitute ground beef if you can't find buffalo meat.



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

Puzzling

Unscramble the words below that remind us of Halloween.



mtuseoc _____
hfigtr _____
daycn _____
rpaty _____

Answers: costume, fright, candy, party.

Mini Jokes



Sally: Why did the spider buy a car?

Seth: So he could take it for a spin!

Eco Note



Many species of butterflies are endangered or threatened. When in their caterpillar stage, most species can eat only a certain kind of leaf. If their habitat is disturbed, they can die out quickly. Global warming is also hard on butterflies. They are cold-blooded, taking on the same temperature as the surrounding air. If the air gets too warm, many butterflies can't survive.

adapted from climatekids.nasa.gov

Thank You



The Mini Page thanks Jim Kalisch, Department of Entomology, University of Nebraska Lincoln, for help with this issue.

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