

Venomous Spiders Compare and Contrast

Name _____

The **brown recluse spider** gets its name from its drab brown coloring and its habit of living a solitary existence. These spiders are characterized by a violin-shaped marking on the back of the neck. While many spiders have eight eyes, the Brown recluse has six eyes organized into three "dyads." Brown recluse spiders are small spiders rarely exceeding 3/8 of an inch in length.

These spiders are most common in the southern plain states of Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana and Alabama. They are also established in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. This spider loves dark places and is normally found under porches, in log piles, old tires, or in drains. Inside the house, brown recluse spiders may be found in dark basements, closets, or in trash cans.

Brown recluse spiders will bite humans when threatened, although their bite is only powerful enough to puncture skin; it cannot bite through clothing. Although different people will experience a wide range of intensity of symptoms (some will experience little pain or minor symptoms while other experience intense pain and symptoms), a brown recluse spider bite normally requires medical attention, although there is currently no anti-venom for a bite from this spider. Some individuals (about 10% of those who are bitten) experience major tissue damage, necrosis (decay of skin and tissue) and infection as a result of a bite from this spider. In rare cases, individuals require the amputation of the affected limb.

The **black widow spider** is characterized by its black body and legs, and tell tale red hourglass marking on the underside of its abdomen. Females can grow to lengths of about 1.5 inches. Males are smaller but have longer legs.

The black widow spider is one of the most feared spiders in the world. Its venom is extremely poisonous and is said to be at least 15 times more poisonous than the venom of a rattlesnake. Black widow spiders are found in many parts of the world, but in the United States are limited to the warmer climates of the southern and western portions of the country. Black widow spiders are fond of dark places such as under rocks or logs. In houses and buildings, they may take up residence in closets, furniture, pipes, or in basements. After a female and a male mate, the female often kills and eats the male, hence the name black "widow."

Black widow spiders eat other insects that they catch in their webs. Unlucky victims are injected with venom which liquefies their insides. The spider can then easily consume its prey. Black widow spiders will bite humans when they feel threatened. While the venom is not toxic enough to normally cause death, it is extremely painful, and is often severe enough to require hospitalization. Headaches, chest or abdominal pain, muscle cramps, and trouble breathing are the most common symptoms.

1. Which of the following do both kinds of spider have in common?

- A. They both live in dark places
- B. They both have red hourglass markings
- C. They are both about the same size
- D. They are both the same color

2. What makes the brown recluse spider different from most spiders?

- A. The bite of the brown recluse is more powerful than that of most spiders
- B. They are larger than most spiders
- C. They live in the southern United States
- D. They have less eyes than most spiders

3. Which is accurate?

- A. The black widow spider is smaller than the brown recluse spider
- B. The black widow spider and the brown recluse spider are found in different habitats and different states
- C. The black widow spider and the brown recluse spider live in similar habitats and some of the same states
- D. The bites of both the black widow and the brown recluse spiders are not usually severe

4. What is described below?

I saw a dark-colored spider in my trash can. It was about an inch and a half long. It looked like it might have some red markings on its belly.

- A. Male black widow spider
- B. Female brown recluse spider
- C. Female black widow spider
- D. Male brown recluse spider

5. Which of the following best describes why the brown recluse spider has “recluse” in its name?

- A. Its venom is so toxic that in some cases it causes people to lose limbs
- B. The spider is often found in dark places, under logs, and in basements
- C. It is drab and plain-colored, which makes it look relatively harmless
- D. These spiders live alone and rarely associate with other brown recluse spiders