

# S T I N G I N G I N S E C T S

There are literally thousands of species of insects capable of stinging. Fortunately, most of these insects are not dangerous. Call 1-800-222-1222 for treatment advice. If serious symptoms develop, including flushing, swelling of the face, shortness of breath or persistent pain seek medical attention immediately.

The following insects are common to Florida:

## Fire Ant

- Reddish brown in color, 1/8 to 1/4 of an inch long.
- Mounds range from 8 to 36 inches high with a diameter up to 4 feet.
- Aggressive when disturbed. Bites can cause severe itching and pain. Apply a baking soda paste to the affected area to relieve symptoms.
- Blisters appear within 24 hours and become infected easily. Symptoms may be mild to severe. **Seek medical attention if symptoms worsen.**



## Vinegaroon

- Often mistaken for a scorpion due to its similar color and size, the vinegaroon does not have a stinger on its tail.
- When provoked it will spray a vinegar-like substance that can be irritating to the eyes.
- If sprayed, flush eyes gently with running water to relieve pain.
- **If pain persists, seek medical attention.**



## Florida Scorpion

- Two to three inches long with a tail that curves over its head when in the attack position.
- Prefers dark corners in places like garages, closets, decayed wood and under rocks.
- Welt can be painful but usually requires no medical attention other than first aid.

## Assassin (or Kissing) Bug

- Can be black and white or bright orange.
- The “sucking” mouthpiece is a slender tube through which venom is injected into the skin.
- Swelling and redness may be associated with this bite. **Seek medical attention if this occurs.**



## Centipede

- Six to eight inches long with a flat, elongated, segmented body. It has a pair of legs attached to each body segment.
- Poisonous front claws behind the head grasp and kill prey.
- Sting causes pain and sensitivity similar to that of a bee.
- Treat affected area by applying an ice pack. **Seek immediate medical treatment if allergic reactions develop.**



## Giant Water Bug

- Large, flat brownish-black bug up to four inches long, it both swims and flies after prey.
- Grasps victim with strong front legs and, like the assassin bug, it injects a tissue-dissolving venom that causes extreme pain and inflammation below the bite. **Seek medical attention if you experience redness, swelling or an increase in pain.**



## Blister Beetle

- Ranges from black to gray, striped to brightly colored.
- When disturbed, it excretes juices that cause the skin to blister like a burn. **If symptoms do not resolve, seek medical attention.**



# C A T E R P I L L A R S

Handling caterpillars may cause intense burning pain due to the insect's spines becoming lodged in the skin. Severity of symptoms depends on the maturity of the insect, the victim's sensitivity to the spines, and the number of spines embedded in the skin. The most common symptoms are redness, swelling, localized pain, itching and rash.

**NEVER RUB THE AFFECTED AREA.** Spines can be removed by applying adhesive tape to the affected area and quickly removing it. Call 1-800-222-1222 for treatment advice.

## Saddleback Caterpillar

- Mostly brown with a light green back with a brown spot (“saddle”), the saddleback has spines arranged in groups on its body.



## Io Caterpillar

- Two inches long, pale green with yellow spines and red-yellow stripe.
- The Io is a stinging caterpillar with tufts of hollow spinelike hairs connected to venom cells.



## Puss Caterpillar

- The most common poisonous Florida caterpillar, the puss caterpillar is about one inch long. It is a white-tan color with spine-like hairs covering its body.



# B E E S , W A S P S & H O R N E T S

## Honey/Bumble Bee

- The black and yellow honey or bumble bee is important for its role in pollination of fruit trees, vegetables and flowers.
- Its stinger is barbed (like a fishing hook). The muscles around the venom sac of the stinger continue to work for up to 20 minutes after the stinger has become detached from the insect's body. It is important to remove stinger as soon as possible.



## Africanized Honey Bees

- Appearance and venom are similar to domestic honey bees.
- They are aggressive and attack in swarms.
- If attacked by bees, **RUN** to the nearest shelter (house, car, building, etc.) as fast as you can.
- Bees usually only attack to defend their home.

**AVOID waving arms or disturbing their nests.**

**Stingers need to be removed with care so the poison sac attached to the stinger is not crushed. Use a piece of cardboard or other blunt-edged device to gently scrape the stinger away. Call 1-800-222-1222 for treatment advice.**

## Wasp

- Brown with long legs, the wasp builds its nest under eaves of a building.
- Is capable of stinging multiple times when disturbed.



## Hornet/Yellow Jacket

- Black with yellow-white markings on face, chest and end of abdomen.
- Hornets and yellow jackets live in colonies in nests usually attached to underside of a tree limb or eaves of a house. Some species nest in the ground.
- Can be aggressive and may sting multiple times.



# S P I D E R S

Approximately 20,000 species of spiders live in the U.S. Almost all are capable of biting but very few can penetrate human skin. Bites can be painful and may cause redness, swelling and infection. In Florida, only the black widow and the brown recluse are considered potentially dangerous. Call 1-800-222-1222 for treatment advice.

## Black Widow

- Smooth, shiny black or brown body with red hourglass on underbelly.
- Prefers dark, quiet places like garages, meter boxes, and furniture.
- Bite may or may not be painful initially. Pain begins in one to three hours and may last up to 48 hours.
- Symptoms include abdominal pain, dizziness, headache, sweating, cramps, weakness and difficulty breathing. **Seek medical attention!**



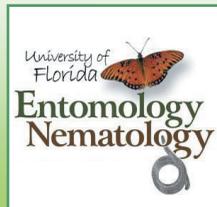
## Brown Recluse

(Brown Recluse spiders are NOT native to Florida.)

- Yellow-orange to brown in color and can grow up to the size of a quarter. Has violin shaped marking on its head.
- Hides in bathroom closets, over door frames and in corners.
- Bite feels like a sting followed by intense pain. Wound looks like a blister and may take on a “bull’s eye” appearance. Eventually the wound may develop into a large ulcerated area.
- Symptoms develop within 36 hours. **Seek medical attention!**



florida's poison centers  
Children's Medical Services



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# FLORIDA VENOMOUS CRITTERS

## About the Florida Poison Information Center Network

Florida Poison Information Center Network (FPICN) includes centers in Miami, Tampa and Jacksonville. All three centers are accessible 24 hours a day/7 days a week by calling toll-free 1-800-222-1222. Calls are answered by specially trained nurses, pharmacists, physicians, and on-call toxicologists who have computerized access to the latest in-depth poison management guidelines. FPICN also conducts various educational programs for the general public or health care providers. To schedule a program or request poison prevention materials, contact the poison center in your area using one of the administrative telephone numbers listed below.

FPICN is funded by the Department of Health, Children's Medical Services, State of Florida.

- FPIC/Miami is affiliated with the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics and Jackson Health Systems. Administrative line: (305) 585-5250
- FPIC/Tampa is based at Tampa General Hospital and is affiliated with the University of South Florida College of Medicine. Administrative line: (813) 844-7044
- FPIC/Jacksonville is a cooperative effort between the University of Florida College of Medicine / UF Health Science Center and Shands Jacksonville Medical Center. Administrative line: (904) 244-4465

1-800-222-1222 V/TTY

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