

IN-DEPTH GUIDE

Spiders and scorpions: the complete homeowner's guide

Everything a homeowner needs in one place, based on public guidance from the U.S. EPA and CDC, with links to every source.

PestGuardCo.com · To reach an independent local pest control company, call (855) 424-9709.

> Plain-language summary of public guidance from the U.S. EPA and CDC · Updated November 2026

Check these first

1. **Look at the webs**: messy, tangled webs in dark corners vs. neat orb webs outdoors.

2. **Check dark, undisturbed spots**: closets, boxes, under furniture, garages and basements.

3. **Look at the spider's markings from a safe distance** (a red hourglass or a violin shape matters).

4. **Notice other bugs**. Lots of spiders often means lots of insects for them to eat.

5. **For scorpions, check at night** with a flashlight (many glow under UV light).

6. **Check shoes, bedding and clothes on the floor** before using them in scorpion areas.

If you see this, it usually means...

IF YOU SEE

Many cobwebs in corners and basements

IT USUALLY MEANS

Common house spiders feeding on other insects

NEXT STEP

Vacuum webs and look for the insects drawing them in.

IF YOU SEE

Shiny black spider with a red hourglass underneath

IT USUALLY MEANS

Likely a black widow

NEXT STEP

Don't touch it. Keep kids and pets away.

IF YOU SEE

Brown spider with a dark violin shape on its back

IT USUALLY MEANS

Possibly a brown recluse (mainly South-Central states)

NEXT STEP

Shake out clothes and shoes; reduce clutter.

IF YOU SEE

A scorpion inside

IT USUALLY MEANS

More may be getting in through gaps

NEXT STEP

Seal gaps and check bedding and shoes.

IF YOU SEE

Spiders mostly near outdoor lights

IT USUALLY MEANS

Spiders following insects drawn to lights

NEXT STEP

Switch to yellow bug lights and move lights away from doors.

How to tell what you have

Black widow

Shiny black, round body, red hourglass under the abdomen.

Venomous. Usually in undisturbed spots like woodpiles, sheds and garages.

vs

Brown recluse

Light to dark brown, with a darker violin shape on the front of the body.

Venomous. Hides in closets, boxes and clutter in parts of the South and Midwest.

SIZE

Varies by species

COLOR

Varies by species

WHERE

Corners, basements, garages, block walls

WHEN

Late summer and fall; scorpions in heat

Most spiders are harmless

Common house spiders feed on flies, mosquitoes and other insects, so lots of spiders often means plenty of insects for them to eat. Reducing those insects, plus vacuuming webs, usually brings numbers down.

The two to know in the U.S. are the black widow and the brown recluse. CDC/NIOSH notes spiders usually bite only when trapped or touched, for example when reaching into a glove or a box.

Black widow and brown recluse

Black widows are shiny black with a red hourglass under the abdomen and live in quiet places like woodpiles, sheds, garages and outdoor furniture. Brown recluses are brown with a darker violin shape and hide in clutter, closets and boxes, mostly in South-Central and Midwestern states.

If someone is bitten by either, clean the bite, apply a cold pack, and get medical care.

Scorpions

CDC/NIOSH notes scorpions usually hide during the day and are active at night, under rocks, wood and anything lying on the ground. Most live in dry, desert areas, including the Southwest.

Indoors, check shoes, clothing and bedding before use, keep beds away from walls, and seal gaps around doors and pipes. A UV flashlight at night can help spot them.

Prevention around the house

Seal cracks and gaps, add door sweeps and fix screens. Keep woodpiles, rocks and debris away from the house, and move outdoor lights away from doors so fewer insects (and the spiders that hunt them) gather there.

Wear gloves when moving stored boxes, firewood or debris.

What to do and what to avoid

Do

- Vacuum webs, egg sacs and spiders from corners, closets and windowsills.
- Cut clutter, especially boxes on the floor in closets, basements and garages.
- Store items in sealed plastic bins instead of cardboard.
- Shake out shoes, gloves and clothes that have been sitting, especially in scorpion areas.
- Move beds slightly away from walls and keep bedding off the floor.

Avoid

- × Don't handle spiders or scorpions with bare hands.
- × Don't reach blindly into boxes, woodpiles or dark corners; wear gloves.
- × Don't use foggers. They don't reach spiders and scorpions in cracks.
- × Don't assume every spider is dangerous. Most house spiders are harmless and eat other insects.

Health and safety

- CDC/NIOSH notes the black widow and brown recluse are the main venomous spiders in the U.S. Spiders aren't usually aggressive; most bites happen when one is trapped or touched.
- Get medical care for a bite from a black widow or brown recluse, or any bite with spreading pain, sweating, cramps or a growing wound.
- Scorpion stings are painful; some species can cause serious symptoms, especially in children. Call Poison Control (1-800-222-1222) or 911 for severe

symptoms.

Prevention checklist

- Seal cracks and gaps around doors, windows, pipes and the foundation.
- Add door sweeps and fix torn screens.
- Keep woodpiles, rocks and debris away from the house.
- Use yellow bug lights outdoors and keep lights away from doors.
- Keep storage in sealed bins, off the floor.
- Trim plants away from the walls of the house.

When to call a pro

Call a pro if you find black widows or brown recluses indoors, see scorpions more than once, or have a heavy spider problem that keeps coming back.

1

Inspection

Identifying the spider or scorpion and where they're living and getting in.

2

Reducing their food

Treating the insects that attract spiders in the first place.

3

Targeted treatment

Treating cracks, wall voids and the outside perimeter instead of open rooms.

4

Sealing advice

Pointing out gaps around doors, windows and utility lines.

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Questions

Why do I suddenly have more spiders?

Usually because there are more insects to eat, or because cooler fall weather brings some indoors. Reducing insects and sealing gaps helps.

Are cellar spiders or daddy longlegs dangerous?

No. They're harmless to people.

How do I know if it's a brown recluse?

Look for a darker violin shape on the front of the body and a plain brown color. Many brown spiders are mistaken for recluses, so a pro can confirm.

Do scorpions come in from outside?

Yes, through gaps under doors, around pipes and in walls, especially in warm, dry areas.

Sources

Venomous Spiders at Work (https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/outdoor-workers/about/venomous-spiders.html) **CDC / NIOSH**

Insects and Scorpions at Work (https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/outdoor-workers/about/insects-and-scorpions.html) **CDC / NIOSH**

Preventing Pests at Home (fact sheet, PDF) (https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-01/documents/preventpest.pdf) **U.S. EPA**

Do's and Don'ts of Pest Control (https://www.epa.gov/safepestcontrol/dos-and-donts-pest-control) **U.S. EPA**

This guide is PestGuard's own plain-language summary of public guidance from U.S. government agencies (EPA and CDC). U.S. federal government publications are generally in the public domain; follow the links to read the originals. It is general information, not an official government publication and not a substitute for an inspection. If you use any pest control product, read and follow the label. In an emergency, call 911. For pesticide questions, the National Pesticide Information Center can help: 1-800-858-7378.