Spider Bites

Your exam suggests you have a spider bite. Spider bites may not cause any pain at first. But there will usually be a local reaction. This would be swelling, redness, and pain within 1-2 days. Most spiders can cause moderate local irritation with a bite. But two spiders can cause serious reactions:

- **Black widow**. The black widow is a shiny black spider. It has long legs and a red or orange hourglass-shaped marking on its belly. There is usually immediate pain and swelling at the site of the bite. The toxin from this spider can cause severe muscle spasms and pain. Chest or abdominal pain, breathing problems, vomiting, and uncontrolled twitching can occur. Hospital care, pain medicine, and anti-toxin may be needed in severe reactions.
- **Brown recluse (fiddle back) and aggressive house spiders**. Bites from either of these two spiders are not always painful at first. But the toxins released usually cause a severe local reaction including pain, redness, and blisters. Infection may complicate the bite. So antibiotics are often needed. If a large sore develops, surgery may be needed to remove damaged tissue.

Routine treatment of most spider bites includes: rest, elevation of the affected area, cold packs for 2-3 days, pain medicine, and possibly antihistamines to reduce itching. Oral antibiotics and a tetanus booster are also sometimes needed. Please call your caregiver if your pain increases or the spider bite is not any better after 3 days of treatment. **Call right away or go to the emergency room if the bite looks infected or turns purple, or if you have painful muscle spasms.**

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