

Bees responsible for most venomous bite and sting hospitalisations in Australia

2 March 2021



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Over 3,500 Australians were hospitalized due to contact with a venomous animal or plant in 2017–18, according to a new report released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The report, *Venomous bites and stings, 2017–18*, found that more than a quarter (26% or 927 [cases](#)) of these hospitalisations were caused by bee stings.

"Australia is home to some of the most [venomous animals](#) in the world—including spiders, ticks, and 20 of the 25 most [venomous snakes](#) in the world. The majority of hospitalisations for bee stings were due to [allergic reactions](#), with bees and wasps responsible for 12 of the 19 deaths related to venomous bites and stings in 2017–18," said AIHW spokesperson Professor James Harrison from the AIHW's National Injury Surveillance Unit, based at Flinders University.

Spider bites accounted for one-fifth (19% or 666 cases) of all venomous bite and [sting](#) related hospitalisations. Of those 666 cases, redback

spiders were responsible for 42.5% (283 cases) of hospitalisations, followed by white-tailed spiders (38 cases), and funnel web spiders (25 cases). The type of spider was unknown in just under half of all cases (45% or 300 cases).

Venomous snakes were chiefly responsible for 17% (606 cases) of hospitalisations due to venomous bites and stings in 2017–18, with the type of snake unknown in around one-third of those cases (34% or 208 cases). Brown snakes accounted for 36% (215 cases) of hospitalisations due to venomous [snake](#) bites, followed by black snakes (83 cases) and tiger snakes (65 cases). Of the 19 deaths recorded in 2017–18, seven were attributed to venomous snakes.

"Alongside land-dwelling animals, Australia also has some of the world's most venomous marine animals, including the Irukandji jellyfish," said Professor Harrison.

Contact with venomous marine animals accounted for just under 400 hospitalisations and no deaths, with stinging fish (including stonefish and stingrays) responsible for 320 hospital admissions, followed by jellyfish (73 cases).

The rate of hospitalisations for all venomous bites and stings varied by states and territories across Australia. The highest rate occurred in the Northern Territory (31 cases per 100,000 population) and the lowest in the Australian Capital Territory (9 cases per 100,000).

"Residents of the very remote regions of Australia had the [highest rate](#) of hospitalisations (49 cases per 100,000) while the lowest rate was observed for residents of the Major cities of Australia (9 cases per 100,000)," Professor Harrison said.

Another AIHW report released today, *Boating and watercraft-related injury in Australia*, found that 2,670 people were hospitalized for watercraft

injuries in 2017–18. Passenger ships and fishing vessels were common types of boats related with watercraft injury.

Provided by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)

APA citation: Bees responsible for most venomous bite and sting hospitalisations in Australia (2021, March 2) retrieved 20 November 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-03-bees-responsible-venomous-hospitalisations-australia.html>

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