What to feed a house spider

BEFORE YOU KEEP A HOUSE SPIDER

1. In the US, leave black widows (shiny black, red hourglass below) and brown recluses (violin mark, 6 eyes) alone.
2. Never pick it up bare-handed. Any spider can bite if pressed on skin; move it in a lidded, ventilated jar.
3. Don't want it? Most house spiders do poorly outdoors, above all in winter.
4. Keeping it a while? Mist one wall of the jar for drinking droplets.
5. Bitten? Wash it, use a cold pack and call Poison Control (US 1-800-222-1222) after a widow or recluse bite, or get care.
6. UK bites are rare and usually cause only local pain and swelling.

Common house spiders (University of Kentucky): entomology.mgcafe.uky.edu

Spider bite help (Poison Control): poison.org

Spiders in your home, UK (Natural History Museum): nhm.ac.uk

✓ Safe staples

- **Fruit flies (flightless)** – First food for spiderlings
- **House flies and blowflies** – Ideal prey for larger spiders
- **Crickets (small)** – Half the spider's length; remove after an hour
- **Dubia roaches (small)** – Small nymphs; remove if not eaten
- **Moths (small, plain)** – Small plain moths; skip bright ones
- **Waxworms** – Soft larvae for larger spiders
- **Insects it catches itself** – Leave it be and it feeds itself
- **Water droplets (misting)** – Mist the wall, not the spider

! Small amounts only

- **Mealworms** – Small ones for larger spiders; some refuse
- **Mosquitoes** – Fine if it catches them; no sprayed ones
- **Dead insects** – Fresh only; most want live prey
- **Sugar water and honey** – A tiny dilute drop; never instead of insects
- **Ants** – Most spiders avoid them; don't add to a jar
- **Caterpillars and butterflies** – Small smooth ones only; skip bright or hairy
- **Stink bugs** – Web spiders catch them; don't add to a jar

✗ Never feed

- **Bees and wasps** – Stinging prey can kill the spider
- **Ladybugs and fireflies** – Chemical defenses; spiders spit them out
- **Other spiders** – They fight back; keep one spider per jar
- **Sprayed or outdoor insects** – May carry insecticide; buy feeders
- **Superworms and oversized prey** – Too big; prey bites back
- **Live prey during a molt** – Remove live prey before and during a molt
- **Deep water dishes** – Drowning risk; mist or add gravel
- **Fruit, bread and crumbs** – Not food; mold can kill a jarred spider
- **Milk, meat, cheese and pet food** – Not spider food; spoils in the jar

Feeding schedule

Age	Looks like	Food	Amount	How often
Spiderlings	Instars 1–3. Tiny, just out of the egg sac	Flightless fruit flies (D. melanogaster)	1–3 fruit flies	2–3 times a week
Small juveniles	Instars 4–5. Bigger than a fruit fly, smaller than a house fly	Larger fruit flies (D. hydei), then pinhead crickets	1–3 prey, each no more than half to three-quarters of the spider's body length	2–3 times a week
Large juveniles	Instar 6 to subadult. Close to adult size, still molting	House flies, small crickets, small moths	1–2 prey no longer than its body	Every 2–3 days
Adults	Full size; in house spiders, males wander in autumn looking for females	House flies, blowflies, small crickets, moths, small roaches, mealworms	1–3 prey, each no bigger than the spider's body	Every 2–7 days, by type
Molting	Before, during and just after a molt: stops eating, hides in a silk retreat, lies still	Nothing	Water droplets on the wall only	None until about a week after
Female with egg sac	Hides in its hammock or web, laying or guarding a silk egg sac	Normal adult prey once it comes out	1–3 prey sized to the spider	May refuse food for days