

Tarantula Growth and Development



Tarantulas, like all arthropods, have a rigid exoskeleton that cannot stretch. In order for a tarantula to grow it must periodically shed its old exoskeleton after growing a new one underneath. This process is called ecdysis, or molting. Tarantulas grow dramatically with each molt.

Each stage of development between molts is called an instar. A tarantula will molt multiple times before reaching maturity. A mature male will live only months and will not molt again. Female tarantulas are long-lived and will periodically molt even after maturing.

The colors of most species of tarantula change considerably with each progressive molt, with juveniles looking considerably different from adults. Their colors may also vary depending on how close the animal is to molting its exoskeleton.

The tarantulas pictured are all specimens of *Brachypelma baumgarteni* (Mexican orangebeauty tarantula).

- (A) 4th instar juvenile, three months old.
- (B) 6th instar juvenile, seven months old.
- (C) 9th instar juvenile, 14 months old.
- (D) Adult female, approximately 7 years old.

#WeLoveTarantulas

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