

INSECT BITES AND STINGS REACTIONS

BEEES leave their barbed stinger in the skin along with its stinging apparatus, killing the bee.



WASPS have smooth or less-barbed stingers and can sting more than once. They are responsible for almost twice as many allergic reactions as honeybees.

ANTS stings cause generalized reactions less often than stings from bees and wasps.



Fire ants and Harvest ants sting while some species of field ants truly bite.

REACTIONS to stings & bites vary from person-to-person. There are two types of reactions: localized, & allergic.

LOCALIZED REACTION:

Most people will have pain, swelling and redness around the bite or sting site. A large localized reaction may have swelling and redness that extends beyond the sting or bite site. (ex: When stung on the lower leg, the whole leg swells. This may be alarming but is generally not serious.) Bleeding may occur at the site.

One or more of the following symptoms are the most common reactions to bites and stings:

- Pain
- Redness
- Pimple-like spots
- Mild to moderate swelling
- Warmth at the sting site
- Itching

TREATMENT:

If the victim has history of allergic reaction and or is bitten in the face, mouth, throat, or if bee or wasp is swallowed - *get medical attention immediately.*

- If stung on the hand, remove any rings from your fingers immediately.
- Clean wound and remove stinger, if present by gently scraping it out with a fingernail or a stiff-edged object, (i.e. a credit card). **Do not pull** on the stinger-this will release more venom into the skin.
- Apply ice or cool packs to the wound site.
- Elevate extremity to limit edema.
- Apply a soothing ointment, like a hydrocortisone cream or calamine lotion and cover the area with a dry, sterile bandage.
- To reduce itching, swelling, and hives take an over-the-counter oral antihistamine - i.e. **Benadryl**. *This medication should not be given to children under 3 yrs. of age or to pregnant women without consulting a physician.*
- To relieve pain, you may take an over-the-counter analgesic (aspirin, acetaminophen or ibuprofen) according to package directions..

Redness and swelling of the bite or sting site may continue for up to five (5) days in all reactions

COMPLICATIONS

Sting sites may become infected. Infection is more common in fire ant stings because they frequently are multiple stings

ALLERGIC REACTION

This is the **most serious** reaction and **requires immediate medical attention.**

In addition to redness, swelling and itching, some or all of the following symptoms may occur:

Allergic Reaction Symptoms:

- **Difficulty breathing**
- **Hives that appear as a red, itchy rash and spread to areas beyond the sting.**
- **Swelling of the face, throat or mouth tissue**
- **Wheezing or difficulty swallowing.**
- **Restlessness and anxiety**
- **Rapid pulse**
- **Dizziness or a sharp drop in blood pressure.**

*Although severe allergic reactions are not the common, they can lead to shock, cardiac arrest, and unconsciousness in 10 minutes or less. This type of reaction can occur within minutes after a sting and can be fatal. Get emergency treatment as soon as possible. **Call 911 immediately!***

ALLERGIC REACTION TREATMENT:

IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IS NEEDED

An allergic reaction is treated with epinephrine and in some cases intravenous fluids, oxygen and other treatments are also necessary.

Severe allergic reaction of anaphylaxis may occur in susceptible patients from exposure to other insect-related material, including honey and apitherapy

BE PREPARED:

A severely allergic person should always wear a **Medic Alert bracelet and keep a self-care kit (Ana-Kit or Epi-Pen) as prescribed by their healthcare provider, on hand for emergency use in the case of severe symptoms.** *

* **NOTE:** *These kits should not be used as a substitute for medical intervention; you should still see a healthcare provider after being stung. Epi-nephrine alone is not always enough to reverse serious allergic sting reactions and may cause serious side effects in some patients with heart conditions or patients who are taking certain medications.*

Allergic reactions to insect stings can be prevented with allergy shots. The treatment is 97% effective in preventing future reactions. Talk to your doctor about this immunotherapy treatment.

Fatal allergic reactions can occur as the first generalized reaction. Far more common however, is a fatal reaction following a previous, milder generalized reaction. The shorter the interval since the last sting, the more likely it is that a severe reaction will take place.

Interesting facts: *Bees have five eyes. Bees and wasps fly at only 4 miles per hour.*

Avoid Being Stung

You can lessen your chances of an insect sting by taking certain precautionary measures:

- Learn to recognize insect nests and avoid them. Yellow jackets nest in the ground in dirt mounds or old logs and walls. Honeybees nest in beehives. Hornets and wasps nest in bushes, trees, and on buildings.
- Wear shoes and socks when outdoors.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks and shoes when in country or wooded areas.
- Avoid wearing perfumes or brightly colored clothing. These tend to attract insects.
- If you have severe allergies, you should never be alone when hiking, boating, swimming, golfing, or otherwise involved outdoors as you may need prompt medical attention if stung.
- Use insect screens on windows and doors at home.
- Do not use noisy equipment such as lawn mowers, edger's, string-trimmers, or blowers within 50 yards of beehives, 150 yards of colonized African bee hives.
- Spray garbage cans regularly with insecticides and keep the cans covered.
- Avoid or remove insect-attracting plants and vines growing in and around the house.

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INSECT BITES AND STINGS



Allergic Reactions to Stings

- Allergic reactions most frequently occur after being stung by a bee, wasp, yellow jacket, hornet or fire ant.
- Most people are not allergic to insect stings. A localized sting reaction may be mistaken for an allergic reaction.
- **Always seek immediate medical care if bitten on the face, in the mouth, throat, and/or if bee or wasp is swallowed.**

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
NOTRE DAME IN 46556
<http://uhs.nd.edu>