

Insect Stings

- Hornets
- Wasps
- Yellow jackets

Most often, the symptoms that come from these insect stings include:

- Quick, sharp pain
- Swelling
- Itching
- Redness at the sting site

Insect stings can even result in a severe allergic reaction. Symptoms of this include:

- Severe swelling, all over and/or of the face, tongue, lips
- Weakness, dizziness
- A difficult time breathing or swallowing
- Sometimes death due to airway obstruction or shock

Symptoms of a severe allergic reaction usually happen soon after or within an hour of the sting. If you've ever had an allergic reaction to an insect sting in the past, you should carry an emergency kit that has:

- Adrenalin (a medicine called epinephrine that stops the body-wide reaction) and a needle to inject it
- An antihistamine
- An inhaler that contains adrenalin
- Instruction sheet that explains how to use the kit
- You have to get this kit from your doctor. You should also wear a medic alert bracelet that lets others know that you are allergic to insect stings. People who have had severe reactions in the past to bee or wasp stings should ask their doctor about allergy shots.

Prevention

- Try to avoid getting stung.
- Keep foods and drink containers tightly covered. (Bees love sweet foods like soft drinks.)
- Don't wear perfume, colognes and hair spray when you are outdoors.
- Don't wear bright colors. Choose white or neutral colors like tan. These don't attract bees.
- Wear snug clothing that covers your arms and legs. . Don't go barefoot.
- Be careful when working outdoors such as when pulling weeds or removing shutters from the house to paint. Bees often build hives behind shutters.
- If an insect gets in your car, stop the car, roll down the windows and get the insect out of the car.

Self-Care/First Aid

- Gently scrape out the stinger as soon as possible. Use a credit card or a fingernail. (This applies to bees only; yellow jackets, wasps and hornets don't lose their stingers.)
- Don't pull the stinger out with your fingers or tweezers. Don't squeeze the stinger. It contains venom. You could re-sting yourself.

- Clean the sting area with soapy water.
- Put a cold compress on the sting. Put ice in a cloth, plastic bag or plastic wrap. Don't put ice directly on the skin. Hold the cold compress on the site for 15-20 minutes.
- Keep the sting area lower than the level of the heart.
- Apply a paste made of meat tenderizer (like Ac'cent) to the sting area. It seems to break down the protein in the venom.
- Take aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen or naproxen sodium for the pain.
- Note: Do not give aspirin or any medicine that has salicylates to anyone 19 years of age or younger unless a doctor tells you to.]
- Take an over-the-counter antihistamine, such as Benadryl, for the itching and swelling unless you have to avoid this medicine for medical reasons. Look on the label for how much to take.