

WASP AND BEE STINGS



Preventative Measures

Do's and Don'ts



The Sting

Bee vs. Wasp

The Reaction

Local

Allergic

Anaphylactic

The Treatment

Local

Allergic

Anaphylactic



WASP AND BEE STINGS

Preventative Measures

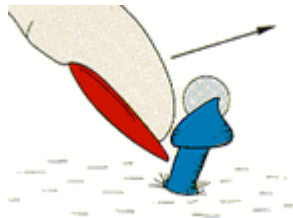
Whether you are working or playing in the outdoors there are certain precautions you can take to help protect you from bee and wasp stings.

- avoid using perfume, aftershave, perfumed deodorants or antiperspirants, hairspray and scented soaps
- avoid wearing brightly coloured clothing or floral prints – least attractive to bees and wasps are white, green, tan and khaki
- keep arms and legs covered
- wear shoes
- wear a Medic-alert bracelet if you are allergic to stings
- do not panic – keep still or slowly back away if approached – bees and wasps are more likely to sting if you are waving your arms around, gently brush off with a piece of paper if a bee or wasp has landed on you
- do not crush bees – they send off an “alarm odour” which incenses other bees to attack

The Sting

Bees and Wasps sting differently and therefore must be handled differently.

- wasps can sting repeatedly and must be brushed off promptly with deliberate movements; once removed quietly leave the area
- bees’ stingers are barbed and will remain in the skin after a sting – this must be removed promptly as the stinger will continue to pump venom into the victim for 45 to 60 seconds.
 - using a flat surface (a fingernail, credit card, or butter knife) scrape away from the puncture wound towards the venom sac



The Reaction

There are three different possible reactions the victim can have to the sting. Those who have reacted to stings in the past are more likely to experience the same or worse reaction on subsequent stings.

Local Reaction: the area immediately surrounding the puncture can become inflamed and swell in a radius measuring up to four inches; pain can last up to twelve hours

Allergic Reaction: reactions vary but can include swelling (not necessarily in the area of the sting), hives, difficulty breathing and/or swallowing, abdominal cramps and/or nausea, variable heart rate and pulse, and headaches; symptoms are usually not life threatening and disappear within four days

Anaphylactic: this is a severe life-threatening reaction; victims can experience any one or all of the following in any order:

- tingling, burning sensation on skin, particularly in the extremities such as the fingers
- hives over large areas of the body
- difficulty breathing with swelling of the throat
- rapid and severe drop in blood pressure
- thinking becomes muddled as brain and other vital organs become oxygen starved
- strong sense of doom and disaster
- loss of consciousness

symptoms usually occur within seconds or minutes of the victim being stung but in rare instances may be delayed up to twelve hours

The Treatment

Local:

- immediately wash the wound to prevent infection from developing
- apply a cold compress to the affected area
- if possible elevate wound above heart level to decrease swelling
- apply anti-histamine cream, hydrocortisone or benzocaine spray to decrease swelling
- aspirin or acetaminophen may be taken to reduce pain

Allergic:

- depending upon the severity of the reaction different treatments may be applied
 - o take an over the counter antihistamine
 - o ingest a hydrocortisone tablet
 - o administer epinephrine (adrenaline) by nasal spray or intra-muscular injection
 - o attend your local hospital emergency ward

Anaphylactic:

- as this reaction is potentially lethal survival is dependent upon immediate response
 - o the victim must be transported directly to your local hospital emergency ward
 - o intra-muscular injection of epinephrine (adrenaline) in the form of an Epi-Pen, may slow the reactions temporarily and should be administered immediately; this may need to be repeated several times during transit
 - o ingestion of an antihistamine may also be beneficial
 - o continue to monitor the ABCs (airway, breathing, circulation) during transportation
 - o CPR should be initiated if indicated
 - o a tube through the mouth into the airway may become necessary dependant upon the speed of the reaction and the ETA to the hospital

All persons with severe allergic reactions to insect stings/bites should carry an Epi-Pen and know how to administer the drug. These are available through prescription from your physician. Like all drugs, this too will eventually expire. It is important to keep an up to date supply on hand during late summer/early fall when bees and wasps are most prevalent.



African Bee



Yellowjacket



Black Wasp



Bald-faced Hornet



Honey Bee