

Insect & Bee Stings - Prevention & Treatment

Acknowledgement: Center for Disease Control & Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/insects>

While most people are actually more afraid about animal attacks by larger animals, it is actually insects that are to be feared more. Bees, wasps, and hornet stings are more responsible for fatalities than snakes, spiders, and scorpions combined. In this section, we will give guidelines on what to do if you are allergic to Bee Stings, how to avoid Bee Stings, and what to do if you get stung.

If you are Allergic to Bee Stings

If you know that you are hypersensitive for bee and perhaps other insect stings, check with your doctor, you may need to carry an EPIPEN (epinephrine). Make sure to check the expiration date of the medications in your first aid kit since most antihistamine medicines need to be replaced after a few years.

Avoiding Bee & Other Insect Stings

- Use insect repellent sprays. Citronella is less aggressive for the skin but generally does not have the same repelling effect as repellent.
- Do not wear any sweet smelling fragrances often found in after shaves and perfume. These often attract flies, bees, and other insects.
- Wear light-colored clothing. Dark blue and black seem to attract attack.
- Bees will mostly attack when either trapped or agitated. Close any opening in your clothes that could trap bees between your skin and your clothing. Should you stumble on a beehive, do not try to collect honey or disturb it in any other way.
- Escape into a body of water if needed when attacked by a swarm of flying insects. Remain submerged, moving away from the insects if possible, until they leave.
- Be aware of surroundings. Listen for buzzing and look for nests or hives. Check long grass and low hanging branches before mowing, especially in late summer when yellow jackets are most aggressive.
- If attacked, move away from any nest they are trying to protect.

Treating Bee & Other Insect Stings

- Bees will often leave their stings in your skin when you get stung. Remove them in a scraping motion with a needle or knife and avoid handling them with your hands as this will probably squeeze more venom into your skin.
- The irritation and pain from an insect sting can often be neutralized by using an insect sting ointment. So make sure to bring some if you expect to go to insect infested areas.
- People who receive multiple bee stings or are either allergic to bee stings can go into anaphylactic shock which could cause swelling, obstructing the airways. Remove the stings and use antihistamine medication immediately. Apply CPR if needed and make sure the airways are cleared.