

INSECT BITES AND STINGS

Many insects bite or sting humans. Most are annoying but harmless. Others, however, can transmit disease or release venom into the bloodstream as well as provoke toxic or allergic reactions. Some examples of biting insects include mosquitoes, chiggers, fleas, spiders, ticks, and lice. *Bees* (e.g. yellow jackets, bumblebees, honeybees, and hornets), ants and scorpions primarily sting their victims. Often, the victim does not realize that he suffered a bite or sting. You have a higher risk of being bitten during the spring or summer, if you live in humid environments, if you wear perfume or cologne, or if you are active in outdoor activities like gardening or sports.

Symptoms may include:

Red, painful bumps on skin
Itching and *inflammation* (swelling, tenderness, warmth)
Stinger embedded in the skin

Allergic Reactions:

Headaches, nausea, vomiting, fever, and convulsions
Wheezing, cough, and sometimes a rash
Watery, red, and itchy eyes

Anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction):

Swelling of the windpipe, difficulty breathing, chest tightness

What your doctor can do:

Complete a physical exam, evaluate the site and provide treatment for allergic reactions or anaphylaxis.

Recommend over-the-counter oral antihistamines and topical steroid creams or lotions to control itching and decrease inflammation.

What you can do:

Remove the stinger by scraping with a card. DO NOT use tweezers.

Wash the wound with mild soap and water. Try not to scratch site.

Apply cool compresses to the skin. This decreases itching.

Rub meat tenderizer on stings from yellow jackets or hornet. Use tweezers if possible to remove ticks; try to remove the entire tick body with the head. Mix 10 parts water with 1 part bleach solution and rub on fire ant bites. See your doctor if you notice parts of the insect remaining under the skin.

Wear protective clothing when outdoors such as long sleeves, pants and boots.

Apply insect repellents containing DEET to your skin not protected by clothing. Apply insect repellent with permethrin on clothing. DO NOT apply to your face or eyes. Some repellents may cause allergic reactions. Apply only to a small area first. DO NOT use on infants. Talk to your doctor before you use any medicine.

DO NOT use tourniquets.

Watch for signs and symptoms of *infection* (inflammation, fever, pus, redness, and pain).

Treat infested areas and pets.

What you can expect:

Most people recover within 1 to 3 days.

Some complications may include bacterial infections, severe allergic reactions, scars over skin, and in rare cases, death.

Contact your doctor if your symptoms last more than 3 days and home remedies do not seem

to provide relief or if you develop signs and symptoms of an infection.

Seek immediate medical assistance if you or someone suffers a severe allergic reaction.
This is a true medical emergency!