



## **Insect Bites**

A bite involves biting with the insect's mouthparts and removing a drop of blood from the human. A sting involves injecting a poison into the human from the insect's stinger.

### **BEE STINGS**

They cause immediate painful red bumps. Although the pain is better in two hours, the swelling may increase for up to 24 hrs. Multiple stings (more than 10) can cause vomiting, diarrhea, headache and fever. It is a toxic reaction related to the amount of venom received (that is not an allergic reaction). A sting on the tongue can cause swelling that interferes with breathing.

Honeybees are attracted by flower fragrances, bright colors and smooth water surfaces. Fragrant perfume, cologne and powders also act as attractants. The fragrance of some house paints has been known to act as an excitant to honeybees and causes them to behave aggressively. For safety, clothing should be light in color, hair should be short or tied up during the warm months to avoid entanglements that cause stings. If the person is sting and cannot identify the insect, see if the stinger is still embedded in the sting site.

### **WASPS, YELLOW JACKETS AND HORNETS**

Wasps feed on the larvae of other insects, which they kill with repeated stings. The stinger is not embedded in the sting site. The adult wasp lives on juices, sap and nectar. It is attracted by odors such as spoiling foods, soft drinks, fruit juices, leather, perspiration, bright colors and water supply. Yellow jackets make their nests in the ground and the paper hornets may be close to the ground or high above it. Both of these stinging insects are particularly hazardous to the bare feet and ankles.

### **Treatment**

If you see a little black dot in the bite the stinger is still present (this only occurs with honeybee stings). Remove it by scraping it. If only a small fragment remains, use tweezers or a sterile needle just as you would remove a splinter. Then rub each sting for 15 minutes with a cotton ball soaked in meat tenderizer solution. This will neutralize the venom and relieve the pain. If tenderizer is not available apply an ice cube while you obtain some. Insect repellents are not effective against these stinging insects.

### **Prevention**

- The first rule when a stinging insect approaches is to "stay still".
- Never slap or brush off an insect of this kind. It will not sting unless frightened or antagonized.
- Be careful when you shake out clothing that has been left on the ground. Wasps or other stinging insects could be in the folds of clothing.
- Avoid orchards in bloom, clover fields and any areas, which are abundant with flowers. Don't wear dark clothing and don't wear perfume or hair sprays.
- Collision causes stings, so avoid running, riding horses, bicycles or motor cycles. A convertible automobile with the top down is especially hazardous.
- Caution children about throwing stones or sticks at insect's nests.
- Do not mow lawns, trim hedges or prune trees during the dangerous seasons.

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### **TRAVEL VACCINATION CENTER**

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- Keep a “bee cloth” (even in an enclosed car) to trap frightened insects before they sting or keep an insecticide spray in the glove compartment.
- Use the skills of an exterminator or the local fire department to remove hornet nests. Beekeepers will often be glad to come to your house and relocate a bee colony.
- Locate yellow jackets and wasps nests during the day and demolish them at night when the insects have returned home. At least two applications of gasoline, kerosene or lye are needed in the hole where yellow jackets have nested. The fumes do the job so do not light the gas or kerosene. Wear protective clothing and call an exterminator if you are uncertain about how to proceed.

## ITCHY OR PAINFUL INSECT BITES

Bites of mosquitoes, chiggers, fleas and bedbugs usually cause itchy red bumps. The size of the swelling can vary from a dot to 1cm(1/2 inch). The larger size does not mean that your child is allergic to the insect bite. Mosquito bites near the eyes always cause massive swelling. The following are the clues that the bite is from a mosquito: itchiness, a central raised dot in the swelling, bites on surfaces not covered by clothing, summertime and the age of the child. In contrast to mosquitoes, fleas and bedbugs don't fly; therefore they crawl under clothing to nibble. Fleabites often turn into little blisters in young children.

Bites of horseflies, deer flies, fire ants, harvester ants, blister beetles and centipedes usually cause a painful red bump. Within a few hours, fire ants bites change to blisters and pimples.

### Treatment

**Itchy insect bites:** Apply calamine lotion or a baking soda solution to the area of the bite. If the itch is severe (as with chiggers), apply non-prescription ½ % hydrocortisone cream. Another way to reduce the itch is to apply firm, sharp, direct, steady pressure to the bite for 10 seconds. A fingernail, pen cap or other object can be used. Encourage your child not to pick at the bites or they will leave marks. You can give Benadryl for itching, but call our office before giving it.

**Painful insect bites:** Rub the area of the bite with a cotton ball soaked in meat tenderizer solution. This will relieve the pain. If you don't have any meat tenderizer, ammonia is a fair substitute. If these substances are not available an ice cube may help.

### Prevention

Mosquitoes and chiggers- many of these bites can be prevented by applying an insect repellent sparingly to the clothing or exposed skin before your child goes outdoors or into the woods. Repellents are essential for infants because they cannot bat the insects away.

## BEDBUGS AND FLEAS

The beds and baseboards can be sprayed with 1% malathion, but young children must be kept away from the area because this substance is somewhat poisonous. Usually you will find the fleas on your dog or cat. If the bites started after moving into a different home, fleas from the previous pet owner's pet are the most common cause. Fleas can often be removed by bringing a cat or dog inside the house to collect the fleas (they prefer the dog or the cat to living in the carpet) and then applying flea powder or soap to the animals outdoors. Careful daily vacuuming will usually capture any remaining fleas.

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**In General:**

Know the symptoms of a systemic reaction (hives, tightness of the chest, hoarseness, wheezing, thick tongue, facial swelling, dizziness, fainting, shock, hypotension) and seek medical help immediately if they appear.

For hypersensitive children, keep an emergency bee sting kit such as EpiPen handy whenever the child is out doors. If no kit is available, place a tourniquet next to bite and remember to release it periodically.

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