

Helpful information provided by the Department of Emergency Medicine

Bee, Wasp, or Hornet Sting

Your caregiver has diagnosed you as having an insect sting. An insect sting appears as a red lump in the skin that sometimes has a tiny hole in the center, or may have a stinger in the center of the wound. The most common stings are from wasps, hornets and bees. On occasion the reactions can be severe (anaphylactic reaction). With a severe reaction there may be symptoms (problems) of wheezing or difficulty breathing, chest pain, fainting, raised red patches on the skin that itch, nausea (feeling sick to your stomach), vomiting, cramping or diarrhea. If you have had one of these severe reactions to an insect sting in the past, you are more likely to have one again.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- With bee stings, a small sac of poison is left in the wound. Brushing across this with something such as a credit card, or anything similar, will help remove this and decrease the amount of the reaction. This same procedure will not help a wasp sting as they do not leave behind a stinger and poison sac, and they can sting multiple times.
- Apply a cold compress for 10 to 20 minutes every hour for one to two days, depending on severity, to reduce swelling and itching.
- After 24 to 48 hours, a warm compress may be soothing and will help decrease swelling.
- To lessen pain, a paste made of water and Adolph's[®] meat tenderizer, or baking soda, may be rubbed on the bite or sting and left on for 5 minutes.
- To relieve itching and swelling, you may use: Diphenhydramine (Benadryl[®]), available over the counter. Take medication as directed. **DO NOT DRINK ALCOHOL OR DRIVE WHILE TAKING THIS MEDICATION.**

Hydrocortisone cream may be applied lightly four times per day for a couple of days or as directed. Calamine lotion with diphenhydramine may be used lightly on the bite four times per day for itching or as directed. Do not take with oral diphenhydramine (Benadryl[®]).

- Use acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) or ibuprofen (Advil[®] or Motrin[®]) for relief of pain and discomfort as needed.
- If you suffered a severe reaction:
If you did not require hospitalization, an adult will need to stay with you for 24 hours in case symptoms (problems) return. You will need to wear a medic-alert bracelet or necklace stating the allergy. You and your family need to learn when and how to use an anaphylaxis kit or epi-pen. If you have had a severe reaction before, always carry your anaphylaxis kit with you. Other family members should also know how to administer this in an emergency.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

- None of the above helps within 2 to 3 days.
- The area becomes red, warm, tender, and swollen beyond the area of the bite or sting
- An oral temperature above develops, not controlled by medication.