

Insect Stings



Although insect stings can be irritating, symptoms usually don't require treatment by a doctor. However, kids who are highly allergic to insect stings may have life-threatening symptoms and may require emergency treatment.

Signs of a Severe Allergic Reaction:

- swelling of the face or mouth
- difficulty swallowing or speaking
- chest tightness, wheezing, or difficulty breathing
- dizziness or fainting
- abdominal pain, nausea, or vomiting



What to Do:

If there are signs of a severe reaction, call for emergency medical care, and give diphenhydramine while waiting for the ambulance. If your child has been previously prescribed injectable epinephrine, it should be given if signs of a severe reaction are present.

If there are not signs of a severe reaction:

1. Remove the child from the area where he or she was stung.
2. If the child was stung by a honeybee, wasp, hornet, or yellow jacket, and the stinger is visible, remove it by gently scraping the skin horizontally with the edge of a credit card or your fingernail.
3. Wash the area with soap and water.
4. Apply ice or a cool wet cloth to the area to relieve pain and swelling.
5. If the area is itchy, apply a paste of baking soda and water, or calamine lotion (do not apply calamine to the child's face or genitals).

Seek emergency medical care if:

- the child shows symptoms of a severe allergic reaction
- the sting is anywhere in the mouth
- the child has a known severe allergy to a stinging insect
- injectable epinephrine (EpiPen) was used

Think Prevention!

Try to have the child avoid: walking barefoot while on grass; using scented soaps, perfumes, or hair spray; dressing in bright colors or flowery prints; areas where insects nest or congregate; and drinking from soda cans. Also make sure that: outside garbage cans have tight-fitting lids; there are no stagnant pools of water (in rain gutters, flower pots, birdbaths, etc.); and food is covered when eating outside.

Note: All information is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult a doctor. Review this with a doctor prior to use.

Reviewed by: Larissa Hirsch, MD Date reviewed: June 2007