
Public Health :

First Aid for Bee and Insect Stings

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a healthcare professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

Most bees and insects will not attack if left alone. If provoked, a bee will sting in defense of its nest or itself. Many people are stung each year and some die, as a result of allergic reactions.

Reducing the Risk of Being Stung

- Wear light colored, smooth-finished clothing. Light colored clothing attracts fewer bees than dark clothing.
- Avoid perfumed soaps, shampoos, and deodorants. Don't wear cologne or perfume. Avoid bananas and banana-scented toiletries.
- Wear clean clothing and bathe daily. Sweat angers bees.
- Cover the body as much as possible with clothing.
- Avoid flowering plants.
- Keep areas clean. Social wasps thrive in places where humans discard food, so clean up picnic tables, grills and other outdoor eating areas.
- If a single stinging insect is flying around, remain still or lie face down on the ground. The face is the most likely place for a bee or wasp to sting.
- Swinging or swatting at an insect may cause it to sting.
- If several stinging insects attack you at the same time, run to get away from them. Bees release a chemical when they sting. This alerts other bees to the intruder. More bees often follow. Go indoors or jump into

water. Outdoors, a shaded area is better than an open area to get away from the insects.

- If a bee comes inside your vehicle, stop the car slowly, and open all the windows.

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- Have someone stay with the victim to be sure that they do not have an allergic reaction.
- Wash the site with soap and water.
- The stinger can be removed using a 4 x 4 inch gauze wiped over the area or by scraping a fingernail over the area. Never squeeze the stinger or use tweezers. It will cause more venom to go into the skin and injure the muscle.
- Apply ice to reduce the swelling.
- Do not scratch the sting. This will cause the site to swell and itch more, and increase the chance of infection.

Allergic Reactions to Bee Stings

Allergic reactions to bee stings can be deadly. People with known allergies to insect stings should always carry an insect sting allergy kit and wear a medical ID bracelet or necklace stating their allergy. See a physician about getting either of these.

There are several signs of an allergic reaction to bee stings. Look for swelling that moves to other parts of the body, especially the face or

neck. Check for difficulty in breathing, wheezing, dizziness or a drop in blood pressure. Get the person immediate medical care if any of these signs are present. It is normal for the area that has been stung to hurt, have a hard swollen lump, get red and itch. There are kits available to reduce the pain of an insect sting. They are a valuable addition to a first aid kit.

Government of Ontario

For information about health services and resources :

www.health.gov.on.ca

For consumer-friendly health tips and information :

www.HealthyOntario.com

INFOline: 1-877-234-4343;

TTY: 1-800-387-5559

Telehealth Ontario:

1-866-797-0000; TTY 1-866-797-0007

INFOline is open during business hours and can provide general information on healthcare.

Telehealth Ontario is a 24/7 service which uses nurse practitioners to answer your immediate health concerns.