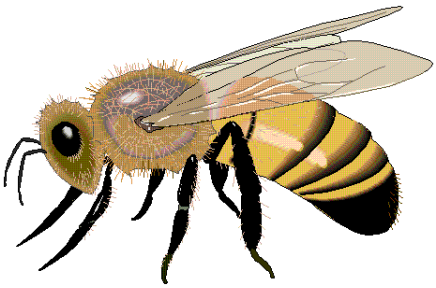
BEE CAREFUL



Wasps, bees, ants and other hymenopterans generally go about their business without bothering anyone. Once targeted, one has little protection from the insect's venomous stinger, designed by nature to inflict sharp pain. The worst is over in a few minutes as the body responds immediately to the sting by releasing fluid from the blood to flush out the poison. There will be redness and swelling for a few hours. Others will suffer a delayed reaction including low-grade fever, mild nausea, tiredness and aches, perhaps several days or a week after the actual sting. In rare cases, people who suffer a delayed reaction may be at risk for anaphylaxis, which can result in irregular heartbeat, shock and death. As with many other things in life, prevention is the best cure.

Bees are attracted by strong smells and bright colours. They are most active on bright sunny days. Rapid movement startles the bee and encourages stinging. A bee can sting you just about anywhere but the face is the most likely place for a bee or wasp to sting. One of the most dangerous places to be stung is inside the mouth. The resulting swelling can block off breathing with fatal results. This usually happens as a result of having a drink outside and not noticing a bee getting into it. This can easily happen if drinking out of a can. Always use a straw. A few tips to avoid getting stung:

- wear light colored, smooth-finished clothing, light colored clothing attracts fewer bees than dark clothing
- avoid cologne, perfumed soaps, shampoos, and deodorants
- wear clean clothing and bathe daily, sweat angers bees
- cover the body as much as possible with clothing
- 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 bee does land, take steps to avoid frightening it:

- hold still, swinging or swatting at an insect may encourage it to sting
- remain still or lie face down on the ground
- try blowing gently on the bee, this can encourage it to move on while not startling it
- 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

What to do if you are stung:

- 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 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. 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. Contact a doctor immediately or call 911 if a person starts to have a severe reaction to a bee or wasp sting.

Just when you thought it was safe… While bees are more active in the spring and summer, watch out for wasps in the fall. Yellow jacket hives grow bigger and bigger during the summer and are at their biggest in the fall. That means there are more of them. And they get more ornery and likely to sting as the days grow shorter, the weather cools and their food supplies start to run low. Wasp stings are quite similar to bee stings. The main difference is that there is no stinger left in the sting site, and the reaction tends to be worse.

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**** Provided as general information only. A physician should always be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions.***