

INSECT BITES AND STINGS

In most people, an insect bite or sting causes only a painful swelling with redness and itching at the site of the sting. But some people are severely allergic to these stings and being stung may cause a life-threatening allergic reaction.

Ask the victim if he has ever had an allergic reaction to a sting before. Also look for the signs of an allergic reaction. If you suspect the casualty is having an allergic reaction to a sting, place him at rest and give first aid for a severe allergic reaction.

Signs and Symptoms at the site of a bite or sting:

- sudden pain
- swelling
- heat
- redness
- itching

Signs and Symptoms of an allergic reaction to a bite or sting:

- general itching, rash
- a bump on the skin that may be white, pink, reddish or blotchy
- generalized swelling – especially of the airway
- weakness, headache
- fever
- breathing difficulties that may be severe
- anxiety, abdominal cramps, vomiting

First aid for an insect bite or sting

1. Examine the sting site closely, looking for the stinger that may still be in the skin. If it is there, remove it by carefully scraping it and the attached poison sac from the skin. Scrape the stinger from the skin with a sharp edge like a knife blade or a credit card. Don't use tweezers, fingers or anything that may squeeze more poison into the body.
2. For the irritation at the site of the sting, apply rubbing alcohol, a weak ammonia solution or a paste of baking soda and water. Ice can also be used. Don't use alcohol or ammonia near the eyes.
3. If the sting is in the mouth, give the person a mouthwash of one teaspoonful of baking soda in a glass of water, or a piece of ice to suck on. If there is swelling in the mouth, or if there is difficulty breathing, monitor the person closely and get medical help!

Prepared: June 2002

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