



Weekly Safety Meeting

Insect Sting Allergies

Nearly everyone has experienced an insect bite or sting at some point in his or her life. Most of the time, these stings and bites lead to mild pain or itching right where they occurred. Sometimes, however, people can experience more severe reactions that could be caused by an allergy to the sting or bite.

According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, it has been estimated that potentially life-threatening allergic reactions to insect venom occur in 0.4 percent to 0.8 percent of children and 3 percent of adults. Even after experiencing a normal reaction to insect stings, it is possible to experience a more serious allergic reaction at any time during your lifetime. It is important to avoid insect stings whenever possible as well as learn how to respond when someone is suffering from a severe allergic reaction.

It's important to note that not all "reactions" after an insect bite or sting are "allergic" reactions.

Insect Stings in the United States:

According to Allergy and Asthma Care, Inc. (AAACI), there are five insects that cause the majority of allergic reactions in the United States. These insects are honeybees, hornets, wasps, yellow jackets and fire ants. According to The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), thousands of people are stung by insects each year and as many as 90–100 people in the United States die as a result of allergic reactions.

This number may be underreported as deaths may be mistakenly diagnosed as heart attacks or sunstrokes, or may be attributed to other causes.

Types of Reactions:

It's important to note that there are several types of reactions that may occur in the body after being stung by one of these small creatures.

These include:

- Local irritation;
- Allergic reactions;
- Toxic reactions:
 - Some insects inject substances (venom) that can cause a toxic reaction.
 - The symptoms may appear similar to an allergic reaction, but the underlying mechanism is different.

Serum sickness reactions:

Yet another type of reaction that can occur with insect bites and stings is a serum sickness reaction. The symptoms may appear similar to allergies, but may also include symptoms that are similar to having a flu virus.

Anaphylaxis:

Anaphylaxis is the most serious reaction to allergens there is. Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening whole-body allergic reaction that can impair your breathing, cause a dramatic drop in your blood pressure, and affect your heart rate. Anaphylaxis requires immediate medical treatment, including an injection of epinephrine and a trip to a hospital emergency room. If it isn't treated properly, anaphylaxis can be fatal.

Best Practices in Avoiding Insect Sting Allergic Reactions:

- Avoid stinging insects whenever possible.
 - If you know you have severe reactions to insect stings do not complete work that puts you at great risk of being stung.
- Inspect work areas prior to completing any work to ensure there are no insect nests that could be disturbed.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants in case of an insect attack.
- Have an EPI pen on hand in case of a sting and ensure your coworkers know where it is.

If you suspect someone is suffering some type of serious allergic reaction immediately call 911, even if an EPI pen has been used.

Summary:

In many instances, appropriate self-care is an option for bites and stings. Seek immediate medical care if the victim is known to be allergic or in response to symptoms such as severe pain, fever, nausea, trouble breathing, light-headedness, balance problems, or confusion.

A SMALL INSECT STING...CAN BE A REALLY BIG THING!!

