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WELLNESS WEEKLY

Beware of Bug Bites & Stings

Warm weather makes it easier to spend more time outdoors, but it also brings out the bugs. Most reactions to bees and other stinging insects are mild, but severe allergic reactions can be deadly. An allergic reaction can occur even if a person has been stung before with no complications. Here are tips for preventing and treating bites and stings.

What can I do to keep insects away?

- Use structural barriers such as window screens and netting.
- Avoid wooded, brushy, and grassy areas when possible.
- Don't wear heavily scented soaps and perfumes.
- Use caution eating outside and drinking; don't leave drinks and garbage cans uncovered.
- Don't wear bright colors, which attract bees.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants when possible.
- Tuck pant legs into socks or shoes.
- Wear a hat for extra protection.
- Get rid of containers with standing water that give mosquitoes a breeding ground. Examples include water in flowerpots and outdoor pet dishes.
- Use insect repellent

What's the proper way to use insect repellent?

It's okay to use insect repellent and sunscreen at the same time. The general recommendation is to apply sunscreen first, followed by repellent. There are also some combination products that contain both insect repellent and sunscreen.

- Use insect repellent that contains active ingredients that have been registered with Environmental Protection Agency.
- Spray insect repellent on clothes or skin, but not on the face.
- Don't use insect repellent on babies. Repellent used on older children should contain no more than 10 percent DEET. Oil of eucalyptus products should not be used in children under 3 years.
- Don't use insect repellent that's meant for people on your pets.
- Use insect repellent according to the labeled instructions.
- Avoid applying it to children's hands, around the eyes, or to areas where there are cuts and irritated skin.
- Store insect repellent out of children's reach.



- Wash the repellent off with soap and water and contact a Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) if you experience a reaction to insect repellent.
- After returning indoors, wash skin with soap and water to remove repellent.

What's the best way to remove a bee stinger?

It's best to scrape a stinger away in a side-to-side motion with a straight-edged object like a credit card. Don't use tweezers because it may push more venom into the skin. After removing a stinger, wash the area with soap and water. You can apply ice or another cold compress to help reduce swelling.

What can be done for itching and pain from bites and stings?

Oral OTC antihistamines can bring itch relief. Oral OTC drugs, such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen, can provide relief of pain from bites and stings. In addition, there are many topical OTC drugs that are applied to the skin and can provide itch and pain relief. Some of these are labeled as "external or topical analgesics". They contain ingredients such as hydrocortisone, pramoxine, and lidocaine.

When is medical attention needed?

Most bites and stings are minor and can be treated at home. But you should seek medical attention if you experience the following symptoms:

- Signs of allergic reaction
- Signs of infection
- Symptoms of West Nile virus
- Symptoms of Lyme disease