

Bites and Stings

A normal spider sack contains several hundred eggs. The average beehive has approximately 45,000 bees. Female ticks can lay up to 6,000 eggs, while fire ant queens produce about 1,500 eggs per day. Don't forget about mosquitoes. They deposit eggs together in a raft that contains 100 to 200 eggs.

Suffice to say, humans are outnumbered by these pesky little bugs that can bite and sting causing temporary discomfort or, in rare cases, potentially fatal reactions. Fortunately, most bug bites and stings do not cause any long-lasting health problems. But you should know what to do in the event you get stung by a bee or wasp, or bit by a spider, tick, mosquito, or ant.

If you are stung by a honeybee, wasp, hornet, yellow jacket, or fire ant, try to remove the stinger (when there is one) if it is visible by gently scraping the skin with a straight-edge object, such as a credit card. Wash the area with soap and water, and then apply a cold pack to reduce pain and swelling. If the area itches, such as from a mosquito bite, apply hydrocortisone cream, calamine lotion, or baking soda paste (three teaspoons baking soda and one teaspoon water) until symptoms subside.

Spider bites also should be washed with soap and water. Apply an ice pack and then elevate the area to delay the spread of venom. Seek emergency medical care if you suspect the bite is from a black widow or brown recluse spider, which can cause symptoms such as body rash, fever, headache, pink urine, discolored area around the bite, joint stiffness, lack of appetite and muscle spasms.

If you find a tick, use tweezers to grasp the head of the tick next to the skin and pull firmly until the tick lets go. Wash your hands and the tick site with warm, soapy water and then swab the bite with alcohol. Call your doctor if part of the tick could not be removed, the area looks infected, the tick has been on the skin longer than 24 hours, or symptoms develop, such as fever, headache, chills, nausea, or rash.

You don't have to stay inside all the time to protect yourself from insect bites and stings. When venturing outside to enjoy the warm weather, you can:

- Avoid walking barefoot on grass
- Avoid using scented soaps, perfumes, or hairspray
- Stay away from wooded or brushy areas
- Wear long sleeves and pants, and avoid brightly colored clothing
- Make sure food is covered when eating outside
- Empty standing water in outdoor containers
- Use insect repellent (not on babies)

Be on the lookout for signs of an infection and get medical assistance immediately if you notice any signs of a severe allergic reaction, such as:

- Wheezing or problems breathing



- Throat or chest tightness
- Swelling of the lips, tongue, or face
- Dizziness or confusion
- Nausea, cramps, diarrhea, or vomiting
- Rapid heartbeat
- Hives

For more information about bug bites and stings, visit the U.S. Food and Drug Administration website at www.fda.gov.