

Insect Bites and Stings: First Aid

June 2016

**By Nan Maley, RN
Director of Corporate Wellness
Sullivan Benefits**

Most reactions to insect bites and stings are mild, causing little more than redness, itching, stinging or minor swelling. Rarely, insect bites and stings, such as from a bee, a wasp, a hornet, a fire ant or a scorpion, can result in severe reactions. Some insects also carry disease, such as West Nile virus.

For mild reactions

To take care of an insect bite or sting that causes a mild reaction:

- Move to a safe area to avoid more bites or stings.
- If needed, remove the stinger.
- Wash the area with soap and water.
- Apply a cool compress. Use a cloth dampened with cold water or filled with ice. This helps reduce pain and swelling. If the injury is on an arm or leg, elevate it.
- Apply a cream, gel or lotion to the injured area. Use products containing ingredients such as hydrocortisone, pramoxine or lidocaine to help control pain. Use creams such as calamine lotion or those containing colloidal oatmeal or baking soda to help soothe itchy skin.
- Use over-the-counter medications. Try a pain reliever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others), or an antihistamine (Benadryl, Chlor-Trimeton, others).

Usually, the signs and symptoms of a bite or sting disappear in a day or two. If you're concerned — even if your reaction is minor — call your doctor.

When to seek emergency care

Call 911 or your local emergency number if the injured person experiences:

- Difficulty breathing
- Swelling of the lips, eyelids or throat
- Dizziness, faintness or confusion
- Rapid heartbeat
- Hives
- Nausea, cramps or vomiting
- A scorpion sting and is a child

Take these actions immediately while waiting for medical help:

- Ask the person if he or she is carrying an epinephrine autoinjector (EpiPen, Auvi-Q, others) to treat an allergic attack.

- If the person says he or she needs to use an autoinjector, ask whether you should help inject the medication. This is usually done by pressing the autoinjector against the person's thigh and holding it in place for several seconds.
- Loosen tight clothing and cover the person with a blanket. Don't give him or her anything to drink.
- Turn the person on a side to prevent choking if he or she is vomiting or bleeding from the mouth.
- Begin CPR if the person shows no signs of circulation, such as breathing, coughing or movement.

Source: [Mayo Clinic](#)

Contact [Sullivan Benefits](#) for assistance on how to educate your employees and family members about how to care for summer bites and stings.

Congratulations, just taking the time to read this article is a positive step toward introducing wellness and the benefits available from a healthier lifestyle. Thank you for your time and **THINK WELLNESS!**