



Royal Manchester Children's Hospital

Allergy to Insect Stings

Information For Parents and Carers



Bee



Hornet



Wasp



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



POSITIVE ABOUT
DISABLED PEOPLE

What is insect sting allergy?

It is quite normal to have pain, local redness and swelling at the site of the sting. Some people have large local reactions. A few have generalised reactions. When an insect sting causes a generalised reaction (one affecting the whole body) this is allergy.

What are the symptoms of insect stings?

Not allergy		Allergy	
Local Redness Pain Swelling	Large local Redness Pain Swelling	General Hives Swelling	Anaphylaxis Wheeze Breathing difficulty Throat tightness Faint/collapse

Which insects are likely to sting me?

In the UK, bees and wasps are most likely to sting people.

When should I worry about an insect sting reaction?

Local reactions, even if large should not be viewed as an allergy but rather inflammation caused by the venom in the sting. These patients have low risk of severe allergy. Where local reactions are very large or do not settle medical attention should be sought.

Allergic symptoms occur when the venom from the sting triggers the release of chemicals such as histamine, not just at the sting site but more generally. The risk of allergic reactions is highest if a second sting occurs 2-8 weeks after the first.

People allergic to wasp stings are unlikely to be also allergic to bee stings.

How can I avoid being stung?

People are most likely to be stung in summer and early autumn. Wasps build nests in sheltered areas including trees and roof spaces. They are attracted to sweetened and flavoured drinks, fallen ripe fruit, and dust bins. Bright colours can also attract them. Carefully removing ripe fruit, well fitting lids on bins and not leaving opened drinks around can help to prevent insect stings. Local councils can provide help in getting rid of nests from homes and gardens.

How serious are insect stings?

The vast majority of insect stings just cause localised reactions. Only a small number of stings lead to generalised allergic reactions.

What should I do if my child is stung?

Bees leave a sting behind in the skin and die soon after stinging. Wasps and hornets do not leave their sting or die after stinging. They can sting again. Walk away calmly to prevent getting stung again.

Remove the sting immediately – Remove the sting and venom sac by scraping it out, either with a fingernail, or something with a hard edge such as a credit card, as shown in the picture.



Be careful not to pinch or squeeze the venom sac (e.g. with tweezers) as this might spread the venom further under the skin.

Local and large local reactions – Wash the affected area with water. Ice packs and raising the part of the body that has been stung can reduce swelling. Avoid scratching the area. Painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can be given if required.

Antihistamines can reduce local itch. The swelling will usually start to go down within a few days. More severe local symptoms also settle down without treatment or with local cold compress and use of these medicines.

Allergy reactions – Seek urgent medical help if any of the following symptoms occur: **difficulty breathing, wheeziness or tightness in the throat; faintness or collapse (anaphylaxis)**. These severe allergy symptoms can occur with or without hives or generalised swelling.

Hives and swelling can be treated with antihistamines.

Who needs to know about this allergy?

It is important to inform your child's nursery/school and afterschool clubs. Other carers such as grandparents, relatives and school friends' parents will also need to know.

Is insect venom allergy life-long?

Unless your child is stung repeatedly over the next few weeks to months the chance of another allergic reaction is about 10%. Patients are usually assessed again at the hospital at yearly intervals.

Which patients should be referred to an allergist?

Patients with local reactions, even if large, do not need to see an allergist. Patients who have any generalised allergic reaction after a sting, including those with only a skin rash (hives) should be prescribed and shown how to use an adrenaline pen (auto injector) by their GP and be referred to an allergist for further tests and treatment. Although adults are often treated with injection (immuno)therapy, this is not routinely performed in children.

Where can I find more information?

- Domain J G et al. Current Opinion Allergy Clinical Immunology 2010
- Reisman RF. Allergy 1989

We understand that there may be questions that either you or your child would like answering. Most of us forget what we were going to ask the doctor or the nurse.

Please write your questions below:

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No Smoking Policy

The NHS has a responsibility for the nation's health.

Protect yourself, patients, visitors and staff by adhering to our no smoking policy. Smoking is not permitted within any of our hospital buildings or grounds.

The Manchester Stop Smoking Service can be contacted on
Tel: (0161) 205 5998 (www.stopsmokingmanchester.co.uk).

Translation and Interpretation Service

Do you have difficulty speaking or understanding English?

আপনি কি ইংরেজীতে বুঝতে কিংবা বুঝাতে পেরেছেন ? (BENGALI)

क्या आपको अंग्रेजी बोलने या समझने में कठिनाई है ? (HINDI)

તમે ભાષા કારણે વાતચીત કરવામાં મુશ્કેલી આવે છે ? (GUJARATI)

ਕਿ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਅੰਗ੍ਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਬੋਲਣ ਜਾਂ ਸਮਝਣ ਵਿਚ ਦਿੱਕਤ ਹੈ ? (PUNJABI)

Miyey ku adagtahay inaad ku hadasho Ingriisida aad saharnto (SOMALI)

هل لديك مشاكل في فهم اوالتكلم باللغة الانجليزية ؟ (ARABIC)

你有困難講英語或明白英語嗎？ (CANTONESE)

کیا آپ کو انگریزی سمجھنے اور سمجھانے میں دقت پیش آتی ہے؟ (URDU)

☎ 0161 276 6202/6342

Allergy to Insect Stings – North West Paediatric
Allergy implementation group.

This information should be used in conjunction with advice
from a medical professional.



North West Allergy and Clinical Immunology Network