

## Mass Lung & Allergy, PC

# Stinging Insect Allergy

## Stinging Insect Information

### Severe Sting Reaction

#### Signs & Symptoms

- Hives
- Intense itching
- Nasal congestion
- Facial swelling
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing
- Lightheadedness
- Chest pain
- Palpitations
- Abdominal cramping
- Nausea, Vomiting & Diarrhea

Allergic reactions to flying stinging insects (honeybees, hornets, wasps and yellow jackets) are relatively common. The severity of an insect sting reaction varies from person to person. A normal reaction will result in pain, swelling and redness confined to the sting site. Wash with soap and water and apply ice to reduce the swelling. A large local reaction occurs in 10-15%, and will result in swelling that extends beyond the sting site. For example, a sting on the forearm could result in the entire arm swelling twice its normal size. Although alarming in appearance, this condition is not dangerous and is often treated the same as a normal reaction. An unusually painful or very large local reaction may need medical attention. Because this condition may persist

for two to three days, antihistamines and corticosteroids are sometimes prescribed to lessen the discomfort. The rarest but most severe sting reaction, called anaphylaxis, occurs in about one half % of children and 3% of adults who are stung. Fire ants, yellow jackets, hornets and wasps can sting repeatedly. Honeybees have barbed stingers that are left behind in their victim's skin. These stingers are best removed by a scraping action, rather than a pulling motion which may actually squeeze more venom into the skin. For those experiencing a severe sting, medical attention is required. You should always carry self-injectable epinephrine (EpiPen®) and MedicAlert® identification.



Honey Bee (top)  
Wasp (bottom)

Venom Immunotherapy (Allergy “shots”) can be very effective in reducing the risk for anaphylaxis in certain individuals.

### Stinging Insects

Honey Bee

Bumble Bee

Yellow Jacket

White-Faced  
Hornet

Yellow Hornet

Wasp

Imported Fire Ant

## Avoiding Insect Stings

- Avoid walking barefoot.
- Yellow jackets nest in the ground and in walls. Hornets and wasps nest in bushes, trees and on buildings. Use extreme caution when working or playing in these areas.
- Never swat at a flying insect. If need be, gently brush it aside or wait for it to leave.
- Don't drink from open cans.

Stinging insects will crawl inside a can attracted by the sweet beverage.

- When eating outdoors, keep food covered at all times.
- Garbage cans stored outside should be covered.
- Avoid perfumes, hair sprays, colognes and deodorants.
- Avoid wearing bright-colored clothing.

- Keep window and door screens in good repair. Drive with car windows closed.
- Insect repellents do not work against stinging insects.

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