



What to Do When You're Bugged by Bugs

Why do insects bite or sting?

Bees, wasps, spiders, scorpions and hornets usually attack when they feel like they are in danger.

Sometimes they are protecting their territory, web or nest.

Female mosquitoes need blood to lay their eggs but male mosquitoes don't bite at all.

Ticks are parasites, which means they live on other animals and need to suck blood to live.



What are insect bites and stings?



An insect injects venom into your skin when it bites or stings you. Usually venom is like soap in your eyes - it doesn't really hurt you, but it's not very comfortable. It will make a small itchy bump no bigger than a pea form on your skin. When you scratch your skin becomes more red and itchy. A tick bite can cause a red rash that looks a little like a bull's eye (this may take as long as a week to develop). In the case of bee stings, the area becomes swollen and a stinger is left in the skin.

Does it hurt?

In most cases bites are not serious and only hurt for a little while. The itching is the most irritating part of most insect bites and stings. Some bites or stings, may require a trip to the emergency room but not very often.



What should you do?



If a mosquito bites you, try not to scratch. Scratching will make the itch worse and can cause the bite to swell, bleed or get infected

If you are stung by a wasp, yellow jacket or hornet, get the stinger out quickly. The edge of a credit card works well.

If a honeybee stings you, remove the stinger quickly and wash the area with soap and water. Apply ice to the area for the first 24 hours. An antihistamine can help stop the itching, pain and swelling. Acetaminophen can also help stop the sting from hurting. Hydrocortisone creams and calamine lotions are also helpful to take away the itch.

If you find a tick on you, grab the tick with a tweezers as close to your skin as possible and pull off in one smooth motion. Once the tick is removed, put it in a jar of alcohol to kill it. Don't try to crush it in your hands - your doctor may want to see this tick later.



When to get help



If you have trouble breathing, break out in hives or feel like you are going to throw up after being stung by a bee, wasp, hornet or yellow jacket you could be having an allergic reaction. Go to the emergency room right away.

Once you know you are allergic, your doctor will provide you with a special kit that will contain a shot. This medicine will help to protect you in case you are ever stung again.



Stopping the stinging!

You can keep from getting stung by staying away from bee or wasp nests.

Keep sweet-smelling food or drink covered when you are eating outdoors

Don't swat at flying insects - it just makes them angry causing them to bite or sting.

Wear long sleeves and tuck your pants into your socks and shoes to avoid ticks when out hiking.

Check yourself for ticks after you have been out in wooded areas, fields or long grass.

