

# Insect Sting Allergies

Experts estimate that 2 million Americans are allergic to insect stings, and many of these individuals are at risk of suffering life-threatening reactions to insect venom. Most serious reactions are caused by yellow jackets, honey bees, paper wasps, hornets, or fire ants.

Most people develop redness and swelling at the site of an insect sting, but people who are allergic to stinging insect venom are at risk for much more severe symptoms. These symptoms can include swelling of the face, throat or tongue, difficulty breathing, dizziness, stomach cramps, nausea or diarrhea, and itchiness and hives over large areas of the body.

Avoidance tactics are the first line of defense against insect stings. Teach children with allergies to insect stings to follow these tips:

- Remain calm and quiet, and slowly move away if you spot stinging insects.
- Wear closed-toe shoes outdoors and avoid going barefoot to steer clear of stepping on a stinging insect.
- Be careful outdoors when eating or drinking sweet beverages like soda or juice. Cover food and drinks to keep insects out.
- Avoid sweet-smelling perfumes, hairsprays and deodorants.
- Avoid brightly colored clothing when outdoors.
- Remember that stinging insects are active from spring until late autumn.

Call 911 immediately if you think your child is having an allergic reaction to an insect sting.