



Insect Bites and Bee Stings

What to do when you have an insect bite:

Local reactions to insect bites (mosquitos, black flies, horse flies, spiders) are common and severity can depend on the level of sensitivity to that particular insect. Reactions usually appear within minutes of a bite and include redness and swelling with itching. These symptoms usually improve within a few hours. Children can be particularly sensitive to insect bites and can have more dramatic swelling, redness, itching, pain and warmth noted at the site of the bite. If this develops within hours of the bite it is less concerning than if these symptoms develop days after an insect bite.

What you can do:

- Clean the area with soap and water.
- Apply cool packs/ice packs to help with swelling and discomfort.
- Apply topical gels, creams, lotions such as calamine but avoid topical antihistamines such as Benadryl as these can cause sun sensitivity to the area.
- In children ensure fingernails are clean and short to reduce the risk of infection from scratching.

What to do when you have a bee sting:

Bee stings are common in warmer months and most do not cause any issues other than discomfort and some swelling. If a stinger is visible you can try to remove it by flicking as opposed to pulling at it. Most reactions to bee stings will happen within a few minutes to a few hours and it is normal to see some redness and swelling at the site that may spread and can be about the width of a tennis ball. Swelling and discomfort can last up to a few days after the sting. Some people will develop a larger area of redness and swelling and this usually happens within a few days of being stung.

What you can do:

- Apply cool compresses to the area to help with swelling and discomfort.
- For significant itching you can use over the counter hydrocortisone cream 2 to 3 times a day.

When to call Family Medical

- If you have any redness, swelling or pain that lasts more than 4 to 5 days after bite/sting.

When to call 911

- If you have any difficulty breathing
- If you feel dizzy or faint
- If you develop hives, welts, or a rash all over your body
- If you have swelling of your face, mouth, or any other area that is far away from the bite/sting

Family Medical

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