



Bee Smart and Bee Prepared

Bees, wasps, hornets and yellow jackets are part of the Hymenoptera species. They become a nuisance in our area from late summer until the first freeze. While a majority of people will only develop a minor local reaction to a sting, others are at risk for a severe allergic reaction.

A typical minor local reaction is a small area of redness and painful swelling at the site of the sting. This will resolve in a few hours to a few days.

A severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) occurs in up to 8 percent of the population. Hymenoptera stings cause at least 40 deaths a year in the United States. One study showed that half of the patients who died as a result of a bee sting didn't know that they had an allergy to the venom. Symptoms generally begin within several minutes. **Symptoms to be alert for include:**

Itching
Sweating
Flushing
Hoarse voice

Wheezing
Shortness of breath
Throat tightness
Lightheadedness

If you are stung by a bee or wasp, wash the area with soap and water. If there is a stinger- remove it promptly. Cool compresses every 10-15 minutes per hour may be beneficial. Consider an antihistamine (Benadryl) for itching. If you have had a previous allergic reaction please seek immediate medical attention.

- Never swing, strike or run away from a bee or wasp. Quick movements can provoke them to sting.
- If you're eating outdoors, keep your food covered- especially fruit and soft drinks.
- Trash containers should have tight-fitting lids. Pet bowls should be cleaned after using.
- Avoid using perfume, aftershave lotions, scented soaps and shampoos when you will be in areas where bees and wasps congregate.
- Avoid wearing bright, colored flowery prints. Jewelry that is shiny may also attract bees and wasps.
- If you have a known allergy to bees and wasps you should carry an EpiPen.

If you are stung- call the Poison Center. The experienced nurses know what symptoms to observe for and will give you expert advice. Just call 1-800-222-1222. Don't ever hesitate to call.