

Bites from a bee which in certain individuals can provoke an allergic reaction.

What to look for

In most cases, a bee or wasp sting causes only minor symptoms such as:

- pain.
- swelling and inflammation
- redness.
- itching or burning.

Swelling can be considerably worse with people who are allergic to this type of sting. At worst, allergic people can go into shock with the sting of a bee and these are the symptoms which they may display-

- rapid swelling on and around the face area.
- breathing may be hard.
- wheezing or hoarseness.
- severe itching, cramps or even numbness.
- dizziness.
- a reddish rash
- stomach cramps.
- loss of consciousness.

The swelling usually dissipates within an hour for non-allergic people however this is not the case for people who are allergic.

Anaphylaxis is the name given to the allergic reaction that can be fatal in some people. These people's breathing passage are blocked off when stung, causing collapse and ultimately death, if no treatment has been given.

Causes

The venom of bees, wasps and hornets contains substances which cause the local pain and swelling that usually go after a few hours. However in some people, the venom causes more severe reactions, which can range from more problematic swelling to the potentially fatal anaphylactic shock.

The allergic reaction some people suffer may be hereditary, however scientists are still unsure why such a large percentage of the population suffer from this.

Traditional Treatment

Home treatment bee stings may include placing a cold compress of ice onto the wound. If you have multiple stings or a severe allergic reaction, you need medical help at once.

For pain, take a general pain killer. For strong reactions, try a nonprescription antihistamine. For children, use cough medicine containing antihistamine.

For anaphylactic shock, the usual treatment is the bronchodilator epinephrine. See a doctor immediately for further treatment. (**Note:** Bee-sting kits are designed for adults... for children, read the directions.)

Alternative/Natural Treatments

Herbal Therapies - Apply aloe or apply calendula ointment four times a day.

Homeopathy - A few drops of Pyrethrum tincture, available over the counter, to a sting. If the area swells, take. Speak with your pharmacist or herbalist for dosage information.

Aromatherapy - Lavender or Tea Tree Oil applied neat may soothe the sting and reduce the chances of infection.

At-Home Remedies

If the sting remains in the skin, scrape it away with a knife or fingernail. Do not use tweezers as more venom can enter into the skin. For bee stings, a paste of baking soda will ease the itching. Wasp stings are alkaline and can be neutralised by vinegar or lemon juice. If you're far from home, apply mud; as it dries, it will draw out some of the toxin.

Prevention

If you are allergic always carry a fully operable bee-sting kit.

When to seek further professional advice

- if you are stung and have any allergic type reactions; or if you know you are allergic and you get stung. (See your doctor)