

Bee Stings

Bee stings are very common. For most people, a bee sting causes only an uncomfortable localized reaction and does not present a medical emergency. About 3% of the population are allergic to bee venom and must seek treatment immediately. If you have a known severe bee sting allergy, you should have your prescribed epi-pen with you at all times, be knowledgeable of proper use, and call 911 if stung. Anyone stung multiple times should seek medical treatment. Anyone stung in the mouth or throat should seek treatment.

What is a localized reaction?

Localized reactions include pain, swelling, redness, or itching at the site that typically disappears in a few hours but may persist mildly for 10 days.

What are signs of systemic allergic reaction?

- Tingling or numbness to mouth or throat
- Fast heart rate
- Nausea / vomiting / diarrhea and/or abdominal pain / cramping
- Dizziness, fainting, or headache
- Wheezing or any trouble breathing
- Hives and/or itching all over
- Swelling of face, lips, tongue, throat, or eye area

What can I do at home?

- Ensure the stinger is removed (look for a black dot at the sting site. If visible, remove promptly with a hard object such as a credit card)
- Wash area thoroughly with soap and water and pat dry
- Apply ice for 15-20 minutes. Repeat at least 3 times a day for a few days as needed
- Apply 1% hydrocortisone cream. Continue to apply as needed (after cleansing area) up to 3 times a day.
- Elevate the area if swollen. Repeat as needed.
- Tylenol or Ibuprofen as directed for pain (if no allergy)
- Antihistamine like loratadine, allegra, chlor-trimeton, as directed, for itching and swelling.

When should I seek medical treatment?

- Signs of systemic allergic reaction (see above)
- Increased swelling, redness or tenderness at the site after 2 days
- Continued symptoms for more than 7 days
- Red streaks coming from the area
- Fever, nausea, vomiting, or severe headache