Stinging Insect Allergy

What is an allergic reaction to a stinging insect?

Stings are painful red bumps caused from bees, wasps, hornets, fire ants, or yellow jackets. The pain will usually go away in a few hours. Swelling can continue up to 24 hours. However, some people are allergic to the venom from insect stings. The person's immune system may think it is harmful, and reacts to it.

What are the symptoms of a severe allergic reaction to a stinging insect?

A venom allergy from a stinging insect can cause a life-threatening reaction, called anaphylaxis. It is a medical emergency. It can cause the airways to swell, making it hard to breathe. It may also cause a sudden drop in blood pressure. The allergic reaction usually happens within a few minutes. It does not happen often, but is very important to watch for.

☐ Ask your nurse or doctor for the handout, Anaphylaxis, #1522.

Signs of anaphylaxis can include:

- Itching and raised bumps on the skin (hives)
- Swelling or tingling of the mouth, face, tongue, or eyes
- Trouble breathing or feeling a tightness in the throat
- Coughing, wheezing
- Nasal congestion
- Trouble swallowing
- Light-headedness, dizziness, or fainting
- Sick to the stomach, throwing up, diarrhea
- Stomach pain or cramping
- Confusion or slurred speech
- Anxiety or feeling of impending doom
How do you know if my child is allergic to an insect sting?

If your child has a severe allergic reaction to a sting, an allergist can do tests to see what stinging insect caused this reaction.

The treatment is allergy shots (immunotherapy), which can be very helpful to your child. A serum is made for your child from the things your child is allergic to. At first, a shot of this medicine will be given to your child every week. The shots will build up your child’s immune system to react less to the allergen. In time, your child should become less sensitive (desensitized) to the allergen.

☐ Ask your nurse or doctor for the handout, Allergy Injections in the Clinic #33.

You will also be given an epinephrine auto-injector to treat this severe reaction. This medicine is also called an EpiPen®, Adrenaclick®, or AuviQ®. You will be taught how to use it and you will need to carry it around with your child at all times.

☐ Ask your nurse or doctor for the handout, Epinephrine Auto-Injector #1523.

You will also be given information for your child about wearing an allergy bracelet or necklace.

☐ Ask your nurse or doctor for the handout, Medical ID #1525.

What can I do to help my child avoid insect stings?

• Have nests around your home destroyed.
• If flying stinging insects are nearby, remain calm and move away slowly.
• Have your child avoid wearing brightly colored clothing and perfume when outdoors.
• Be careful when cooking, eating or drinking sweet drinks outdoors.
• Be aware of insects inside straws or canned drinks.
• Keep food covered until ready to eat it.
• Do not let your child go barefoot outside.
What do I do if my child has a severe allergic reaction to a stinging insect?

• Use an epinephrine auto-injector on your child as directed by your child’s doctor.
• Take your child to the emergency room right away or call 9-1-1.

Now that you’ve read this:

☐ Tell your nurse or doctor what a stinging insect allergy is and how you will treat it.  
   (Check when done.)

☐ Tell your nurse or doctor how you will help your child avoid stinging insects.  
   (Check when done.)

If you have any questions or concerns,

☐ call your child’s doctor or ☐ call ______________________

If you want to know more about child health and illness,
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children’s Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-933-1400
866-933-6459
www.phoenixchildrens.org
Facebook: facebook.com/theemilycenter
Twitter: @emilycenter

Disclaimer
The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children’s Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.
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Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.
Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Would you say this handout is easy to read? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading this handout? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any questions about the subject? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, what?
Is there anything you don’t like about the drawings? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

The Emily Center
Health Education Specialist
Phoenix Children’s Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016-7710

Thank you for helping us!