

# BEE STING ALLERGY



Generally, insects such as bees and wasps aren't aggressive and only sting in self-defense. In most cases, this results in one or perhaps a few stings.

In some cases, a person will disrupt a hive or swarm of bees and get multiple stings. Some types of bees — such as Africanized honeybees — are more likely than are other bees to swarm, stinging in a group. If you get stung more than a dozen times, the accumulation of venom may induce a toxic reaction and make you feel quite sick.

Usually, bee stings don't cause a serious reaction. However, if you're allergic to bee stings or have had several bee stings, you may experience a severe reaction such as anaphylaxis.

Anaphylaxis (severe allergy) to a bee sting requires immediate medical attention.

## What are the symptoms of bee sting allergy?

### Mild, local symptoms of a bee sting include:

- Pain or itching at the site of the sting.
- A white spot where the stinger punctured the skin.
- Redness and slight swelling around the sting.



## Severe (allergic) systemic symptoms of a bee sting include:

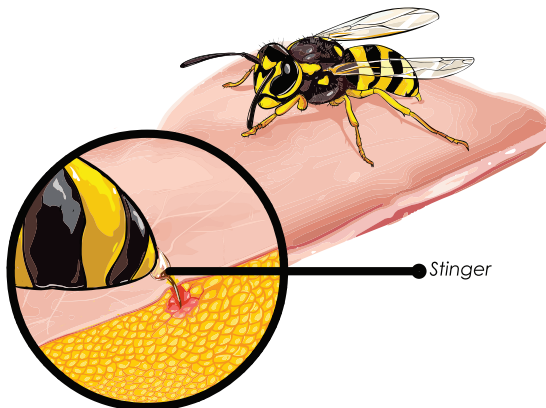
- Hives
- Flushed or pale skin.
- Swelling of the throat, face and lips.
- Headache
- Dizziness or fainting.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Abdominal cramping and diarrhea.
- Difficulty breathing or swallowing.
- Decrease in blood pressure.
- Weak and rapid heart rate.
- Loss of consciousness.



## Who is at risk for bee sting allergy?

**Certain people are at a higher risk for bee sting allergy than others. Risk factors include:**

- Living in an area near active beehives
- Living in an area where bees are actively pollinating plants
- Spending lots of time outside
- Having had a previous allergic reaction to a bee sting
- Taking certain medicines, such as beta-blockers



## When to seek help

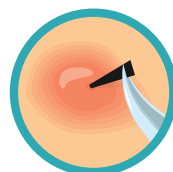
Most people who've been stung by a bee don't require medical attention. You should monitor any minor symptoms, such as a mild swelling and itching. If those symptoms don't go away in a few days or if you begin to experience more severe symptoms, consult your doctor.

If you're experiencing symptoms of anaphylaxis, such as trouble or difficulty swallowing, call Europ Assist (010 133 0525). You should also seek medical help if you have a known allergy to bee stings or if you have had multiple bee stings. When you call Europ Assist, the operator will ask for your age, weight and symptoms. It's also helpful to know the type of insect that stung you and when the sting occurred.

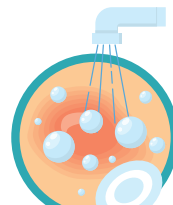
## First aid – treating bee stings at home

Treatment for a bee sting involves removing the stinger and caring for any symptoms. Treatment techniques include:

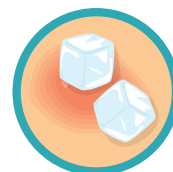
- Removing the stinger using a credit card or tweezers (avoid squeezing the attached venom sac).
- Cleaning the area with soap and water.
- Applying ice to ease pain and swelling.
- Applying creams, such as hydrocortisone, which will reduce redness and itching.
- Taking an antihistamine or apply an over-the-counter cortisone cream for any itching or swelling.



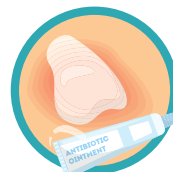
REMOVE STINGER



WASH STING WITH SOAP



APPLY ICE



APPLY CORTISONE CREAM



**If someone you know is experiencing an allergic reaction, immediately call Europ Assist. While waiting for paramedics to arrive, you can do the following:**

- Check the person's airways and breathing. Begin CPR if necessary and if you know how to do so.
- Reassure the person that help is coming.
- Remove constricting clothing and any jewelry in case of swelling.
- Administer epinephrine if the person has a bee sting emergency kit.
- Roll the person into the shock position if symptoms of shock are present. This involves rolling the person onto their back and raising their legs 30 centimeters above their body.
- Keep the person warm and comfortable.



**If you've had an allergic reaction to a bee sting, your doctor will prescribe you an epinephrine auto-injector such as an EpiPen. This should be carried with you at all times and is used to treat anaphylactic reactions.**

**To avoid bee stings:**

- Don't swat at insects.
- Have any hives or nests around your home removed.
- Avoid wearing perfume outdoors.
- Avoid wearing brightly coloured or floral clothing outside.
- Wear protective clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts and gloves, when spending time outdoors.
- Walk calmly away from any bees you see.
- Be careful when eating or drinking outside.
- Keep any outside trash covered.
- Keep your windows rolled up when driving.

If you're allergic to bee venom, you should always carry epinephrine with you and wear a medical ID bracelet. Ensure that your friends, family members and co-workers know how to use an epinephrine auto-injector.

For more information,  
talk to a Platinum Health  
Healthcare Provider.



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