



Insect Stings and Bites

Children love being outdoors and enjoy the experiences of the natural environment. Insect stings and bites may threaten this enjoyment.

There are some simple precautions that may reduce the threat of insect bites and stings:

- Keep grass cut short and remove clover, regularly remove leaf litter
- Outdoor food should be covered
- No soft drink cans outside. Wasps are attracted to sweet drinks, and can crawl into soft drink cans and sting whoever drinks from the can
- Insect repellents should not be used on babies or toddlers, but may be used sparingly on children. It's advisable to test for a reaction on a small area of skin before use. Roll-ons are safer than aerosols, especially for young children. Avoid eyes and mouth and the parts of hands and fingers that may touch faces or mouth.

Many insect bites and stings cause short-term pain or discomfort and localised swelling, but most do not present a serious health threat and are treated by:

- Washing the affected area with soap and water – this reduces the likelihood of infection
- Applying a cold pack to help reduce swelling and itchiness
- Giving paracetamol as a last resort, if pain persists
- Discouraging scratching (as much as possible) as this increases the likelihood of infection.

Some bites/stings can be more serious and immediate medical attention will be needed. If possible, it can be useful to take the dead insect along for quick identification and appropriate medical response.

It is important to monitor a child who has been bitten or stung.

Watch for symptoms that might indicate a severe allergic reaction, or anaphylaxis. These include:

- difficulty in breathing
- swelling around the lips or eyes
- vomiting
- widespread rash
- dizziness or collapse.

Take the child immediately to hospital or call 000 for an ambulance if:

- any of the symptoms listed above appear
- if a child has previously had a severe allergic response to an insect bite or sting
- if the child has been stung in the mouth or throat.

The Raising Children Network provides information on symptoms and treatments for specific insect and spider bites and stings: [http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/insect bites](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/insect%20bites)

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