



Advice on actions to take in case of bee stinging incidents

This document provides advice on actions to take in the case of bee stinging incidents. The telephone number of the nearest medical centre should be written below. If medical help is needed, advise the medical staff of the location of the injured person and approximately how many stings they have received.

Telephone Number of nearest Medical centre

Location of Bees

Sting risks

Honeybees like bumblebees, wasps & hornets have a stinger at the posterior end of their body. The sting is connected to a venom sac and venom is injected into the wound via the hollow sting lancets.

In general wasps are responsible for about 70% of stinging incidents but are often mistaken for bees.

Most stinging insects can sting more than once, the exception is the honeybee –when the worker bee escapes after stinging, the sting and venom sac are ripped from the bee's body and the bee then dies. In general then, bees are not predisposed to sting unless someone is attacking their home, however after the beekeeper has carried out manipulations in the hive, they may be defensive and could attack passers-by.

If the injured person is still surrounded by bees, ensure that you are wearing a protection veil or some form of protection around your eyes and head, when you go to help them. When removing the sting, scrape it away with your nail – do not pinch it, as this will squeeze the venom sac and inject more venom into the wound.

Hazards of being stung

Most stings only result in a temporary injury – intense pain (for a few minutes), swelling, redness and itching around the sting site.

Sometimes the effects can be more severe and in exceptional cases life threatening, depending on the site of the injury and whether the injured person has allergies. Summon medical help if the sting is near the eyes, nose or throat.

Normal reaction

Most people experience local effects such as pain, swelling, itching and redness around the sting site.

Mild Allergic Reaction

Some people will experience swelling in a larger area, not just around the sting site. They may develop hives (skin eruptions) but no systemic effects such as breathing difficulties or blood flow problems. This type of mild reaction can last a few days. The injured person should resist the urge to scratch, which can cause a break in the skin allowing in infections.



Severe Allergic Reaction

In rare cases, a severe allergic reaction can occur. This situation is serious and can cause “anaphylaxis” or anaphylactic shock. Symptoms of anaphylaxis may appear almost immediately or within about 30 minutes. The symptoms include:

- Hives, itching and swelling in areas other than the sting site
- Swollen eyes and eyelids
- Wheezing
- Tightness in the chest and difficulties in breathing
- Hoarse voice and/or swelling of the tongue
- Dizziness or sharp drop in blood pressure
- Shock
- Unconsciousness or cardiac arrest

The anaphylactic reaction can occur the first time someone is stung or with subsequent stings and in severe cases death can occur within 30-40 minutes

If you see any signs of this reaction, get medical help immediately.

ABR
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