



SHIFT BRIEFING



STINGING INSECTS BEST PRACTICES

Stings from insects may cause serious reactions in people who are allergic to them. Death from a bee sting is 3 to 4 times more common than death from a snake bite. You are more likely to be bitten or stung by an insect if you work outdoors or regularly take part in outdoor activities.

Symptoms associated with insect bites and stings can range from mild to life-threatening. This happens because most people are allergic to the insect's saliva or venom. 'Localized' allergic reactions are confined to the immediate area around the bite or sting. People who are severely allergic have 'systemic' reactions, or anaphylaxis, that affect one or more biological systems, such as the respiratory system. If severe enough, the person can go into anaphylactic shock and die.

ASK: What is the difference between a bee sting and a wasp or hornet sting?

A bee stings one time, leaves its stinger in the person, and dies. Wasps and hornets can sting and inject their venom multiple times because they keep their stinger.

Signs & Symptoms of a Localized Sting Injury

Bee and wasp stings are usually immediately obvious. Sharp pain is followed by a burning sensation that soon resolves for most people into a major itch. A red ring or bump will appear at the site of the sting. The person may see a bee stinger in their skin. Wasp and hornets do not leave their stingers, so one will not be seen.

First Aid for a Localized Sting Injury

If a stinger is still impaled, remove the stinger with a credit card, the back of a knife blade, or a similar object. The longer the stinger stays impaled, the more venom is delivered.

Wash the area of the sting to remove any residual venom.

Treat the pain with ice or, if needed, analgesic medication. An antihistamine may give some relief from the itch.

Stay alert and monitor the victim for more serious reactions. Recognizing the developing anaphylaxis is key for patient care.

Signs & Symptoms of a Systemic Sting Injury

As the venom enters the person's body, swelling will expand past the immediate sting site. The whole arm or leg will begin to swell. The swelling can extend to the face, lips, and tongue, making breathing or swallowing difficult. The victim may also get dizzy or confused, faint, or go into respiratory and cardiac arrest.

First Aid for a Systemic Sting Injury

Ask if the person has a known allergy to insect stings and if they have their epi-pen® with them. Assist them with administering the epinephrine.

Call 9-1-1. Report it as a severe allergic reaction to the dispatcher. This is a life-threatening event. Even if an epi-pen® is used, call 9-1-1. Epinephrine is a quick-acting medication but also has a short half-life. This means it can wear off quickly. Some persons will carry dual-use or multiple auto-injectors.

Provide basic life support, including rescue breathing or CPR if needed.

ASK: Who is certified in CPR? Raise your hand.