

THE BUZZ ABOUT BEES & BEE STINGS



BUZZ FACTS

- Description:** Bees are winged bodied insects with yellow and black stripes.
- Habitat:** They live in aerial or underground nests or hives. They live wherever there are flowering plants – from the polar regions to the equator.
- Problem:** Bees sting with the tail when annoyed. Burning and itching with localized swelling occur. Bees usually leave the venom sac in the victim. It takes between 2-3 minutes to inject all the venom.
- Severity:** If a person is allergic, more serious reactions occur – nausea, shock, unconsciousness. Swelling may occur in another part of the body. Death may result.
- Treatment:** Gently scrape (don't pluck) the stinger so the venom sac won't be squeezed. Wash with soap and antiseptic. If swelling occurs, apply an icepack. If swelling is severe contact a doctor.

INSECT STINGS

Generally, venomous flying insects are aggressive only when threatened or when their hives or nests are disrupted. Honeybees and bumblebees have barbed stingers that become embedded in the victim's skin during the sting. After injecting its venom, the bee flies away, but the embedded stinger is torn from the bee's body, causing it to die. Honeybees and bumblebees do not release all their venom during the initial injection; some remains in the stinger left embedded in the victim's skin. ***If the stinger is not removed properly, additional venom may be released and worsen the victim's reaction.***

In contrast, the stingers of wasps and hornets are not barbed and do not become embedded in the victim. Thus, these insects can sting multiple times, and most species (with a few exceptions, such as some yellow jacket species) do not die as a result of stinging.

Most stings cause only self-limited, local inflammatory reactions – pain, itching, redness, and swelling. These reactions are usually more of a nuisance than a medical emergency.

Seek medical attention if you are stung in the mouth or nose as swelling may block airways. Also seek emergency care if any of the following symptoms are present, as these could indicate an allergic reaction: large areas of swelling, abnormal breathing, tightness in the throat or chest, dizziness, hives, fainting, nausea or vomiting or persistent pain and swelling.

People allergic to bee stings should wear a medical alert identification tag identifying them as insect allergic.



Do not pull stingers with tweezers or your fingers because you may squeeze more venom into the victim from the venom sac. Bee stingers can continue to secrete poison for up to 20 minutes and squeezing the wound may inject more venom.

PREVENTING INSECT STINGS

People who know they are allergic to bees need to exercise extra care to avoid being stung. They should carry a bee-sting kit and follow these guidelines:

- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts
- Wear white, green, tan and khaki---the least attractive colors to insects; floral patterns and bright colors attract bees
- Wear shoes
- Avoid yard work & other activities where insect contact is frequent
- Keep garbage cans away from the house
- Remove insect attracting plants from inside and outside the immediate proximity of the house
- Don't use scented soaps, lotions, or perfumes
- When confronted by a bee move slowly. Quick movements provoke bees
- Do not eat when bees are nearby
- Have insect nests removed by a professional exterminator