



CAAC

Carolina Asthma & Allergy Center

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Stinging Insect Allergies



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In the Southeast, bees, wasps, yellow jackets, white faced hornets, yellow faced hornets, and fire ants are common stinging insects that can produce an allergic reaction. While a sting from these can take place at any time during the year, these insects have a tendency to become very aggressive during the late summer/early fall when their food sources become scarce.

These insects inject their venom into their victims at the site of the sting. Most people develop a mild reaction to the sting, which may include symptoms such as local pain, itching redness, or local swelling. Usually these symptoms last a few hours, but on occasion may last longer. These symptoms are not indicative of a life-threatening situation.

Some individuals can experience a very severe reaction that is life-threatening. Severe allergic reactions may develop rapidly and can involve more than one organ system. Symptoms of a severe reaction include: itching and hives over different parts of the body, difficulty breathing or swallowing, swelling in the throat or of the tongue, dizziness, a drop in blood pressure, stomach cramping, nausea, diarrhea, and loss of consciousness. These symptoms require **immediate** emergency medical treatment.



A board certified allergist can diagnose stinging insect allergies through a series of simple skin tests. In some instances, a blood test may be required. After diagnosis, a

treatment can be recommended. **Therapy for this type of allergy does exist. Venom desensitization** – a series of injections - can create an immune defense against a severe, life threatening reaction.

Any individual who has been diagnosed with a stinging insect allergy **MUST ALWAYS** have an auto-injector of epinephrine available **AT ALL TIMES**. In addition, people with an insect sting allergy should wear a medical alert bracelet stating their specific allergy.

AVOIDING INSECT STINGS

- 1. Wear shoes that encase your feet at all times.**
- 2. Wear clothing colors when outdoors that do not attract insects, such as white or gray.**
- 3. Wear garments that fit close to your body. Insects can become trapped in loose fitting clothing.**
- 4. Avoid scented soaps, cosmetics, and perfumes.**
- 5. Stay away from insect feeding grounds such as flower beds, fields of clover, garbage and orchards with ripe fruit.**
- 6. Keep automobile windows closed. Aside from the possibility of a sting, stinging insects in a car can arouse such terror in a sting sensitive person as to create a dangerous driver.**
- 7. Spray areas around garbage with an effective insecticide.**
- 8. Nests, hives, or mounds that house stinging insects should be destroyed by a professional exterminator.**



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