



# PUBLIC FACT SHEET

## BEE STINGS & INSECT BITES

### What is the difference between a sting and a bite?

A sting is when a poison or venom is injected into the human from an insect's stinger.

A bite is when an insect uses its mouth parts to bite a human and remove blood from the human.

### BEE STINGS

Most bee stings are from yellow jackets and cause painful red bumps. The pain is usually better 2 hours after the sting occurs but the swelling may increase for up to 24 hours. Multiple stings (more than 10) can cause vomiting, diarrhea, headache and fever. This is a toxic reaction due to the amount of poison (venom) injected into the body from the multiple stings, not an allergic reaction.

### \*\*CONTACT A PHYSICIAN IMMEDIATELY IF:

- Breathing or swallowing is difficult
- Hives appear
- There are 10 or more stings
- If a sting occurs inside the mouth

### What is the treatment for bee stings?

Remove the stinger if still present (a little black dot at the site) by scraping the back of a credit card or other straight-edged object across the stinger. Wash the site with soap and water. Place ice on the site for 10 minutes. If necessary apply creams that reduce itching. You may rub the site with a cotton ball soaked in meat tenderizer to neutralize the venom and relieve the pain.

### INSECT BITES

Bites of mosquitoes, chiggers, or fleas may cause itchy red bumps. The larger the size of the swelling does not indicate an allergic response to the bite.

### What is the treatment for insect bites?

Calamine lotion or baking soda applied to the bite may reduce itching. To reduce pain at the site, rub the area with a cotton ball soaked in meat tenderizer solution or apply ice.

### For more information on bee stings and insect bites:

Ottawa County Health Department

[www.miOttawa.org](http://www.miOttawa.org)

Medline Plus/National Institutes of Health

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000033.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000033.htm)

For information on tick bites see Lyme disease.