

Insect Bites and Stings



Insect bites or stings are not usually serious and will get better in a few days. Sometimes they can become infected or cause a serious allergic reaction.

Bites from some insects such as ticks can cause other illnesses such as Lyme disease.

Symptoms include:

- Redness
- Pain
- Swelling at the site.

Red flag symptoms

- Risk of airway obstruction.
- Bite or sting around the eyes.
- A large area around the bite or sting that has become red and swollen.
- Stung more than once.
- A high temperature and swollen glands.
- Any signs of anaphylaxis including
 1. Swollen eyes, lips, hands, and feet.
 2. Feeling lightheaded or faint.
 3. Swelling of the mouth, throat or tongue causing breathing and swallowing difficulties.
 4. Abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting.
 5. Collapse or unconsciousness.

Self-care advice

- Remove any visible sign of insect or sting from the skin.
- Keep area clean to help prevent infection.
- Do not scratch the bite or sting.
- Use an ice pack to reduce inflammation.
- Take painkillers if the bite or sting is painful.
- Take antihistamines to help alleviate symptoms.
- Use steroid creams to reduce inflammation.
- Avoid insect bites by using insect repellent and wearing loose clothing with long sleeves and legs. Insect repellent containing DEET are the most effective.

Onward referrals

- Infected insect bites and stings

Signposting

- Pharmacy First England - Antibiotics
- Pharmacy First Scotland - Antihistamines

The information provided is correct at the time of publication, any information provided should be under the supervision of the Responsible Pharmacist. We hold no responsibility for any decisions made using this information.

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