



Prevention of Insect Bites

How to Prevent Insect Bites

What is the Problem?

The health effects of stinging or biting range from mild discomfort or pain to a lethal reaction for those allergic to the insect's venom.¹ Anaphylactic shock is the body's severe allergic reaction to a bite or sting and requires immediate emergency care.²

Thousands of people are stung by insects each year, and as many as 90–100 people in the United States die as a result of allergic reactions.³ This number may be underreported as deaths may be mistakenly diagnosed as heart attacks or sunstrokes or may be attributed to other causes.⁴



Who is at Risk?

Outdoor workers at risk of exposure include: farmers, foresters, landscapers, groundskeepers, gardeners, painters, roofers, pavers, construction workers, laborers, mechanics, and any other workers who spend time outside.⁵ Workers with a history of severe allergic reactions to insect bites or stings should be particularly mindful.⁶

Prevention Tips

Workers should take the following steps to prevent insect bites and stings:

- Wear light-colored, smooth-finished clothing.⁷
- Avoid perfumed soaps, shampoos, and deodorants. Avoid wearing cologne, perfume.⁸
- Wear clean clothing and bathe daily. (Sweat may anger bees.)⁹
- Wear clothing to cover as much of the body as possible.¹⁰
- Avoid flowering plants when possible.¹¹
- Keep work areas clean. Social wasps thrive in places where humans discard food.¹²
- Remain calm if a single stinging insect is flying nearby.¹³
- Carry an epinephrine auto injector and wear medical ID jewelry if you are highly allergic to make others aware of your situation, should you need help.¹⁴



Plan of the Week (POW):

It is important for employers to train their workers about their risk of exposure to insect, how they can prevent and protect themselves from stings and bites, and the first aid response if they are stung or bitten.¹⁵ **REMEMBER** to wear appropriate clothing and encourage those with strong allergic reactions to carry medicine on-hand in case of an emergency.¹⁶

References

- 1-16 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Insects and scorpions. Accessed at: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/insects/>. Updated 24 February 2012. Accessed 28 October 2013.

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NMCPHC Injury Prevention and Violence Free Living Webpage

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/injury-violence-free-living/Pages/injury-violence-free-living.aspx>

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