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Bee and Wasp Stings

Stings usually are just annoying, causing temporary discomfort and pain, but no serious or lasting health problems. But sometimes, they can cause infections that require treatment and allergic reactions that can be serious, even fatal.

Parents should know the signs of an infection or allergic reaction, and when to get medical care. Inform all caregivers if a child has any history of complications so they know what to do in the event of a bee or wasp sting.

Handling Bee and Wasp Stings

- A bee will usually leave behind a stinger attached to a venom sac. Try to remove it as quickly as possible using a scraping motion, without pinching the venom sac at the end. (Wasps don't leave their stingers in the skin after stinging, which means they can sting more than once.)
- Wash the area carefully with soap and water. Do this two to three times a day until the skin is healed.
- Apply an ice pack wrapped in a cloth or a cold, wet washcloth for a few minutes.
- Give acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain.
- For pain and itching, give an over-the-counter oral antihistamine if your child's doctor says it's OK; follow dosage instructions for your child's age and weight. You could also apply a corticosteroid cream or calamine lotion to the sting area.
- A sting anywhere in the mouth needs immediate medical attention because stings in oral mucous membranes can quickly cause severe swelling that may block airways.
- Seek medical care if you notice a large skin rash or swelling around the sting site, or if swelling or pain persists for more than 3 days, which could indicate an infection.
- The following signs may indicate a serious or potentially life-threatening allergic reaction. Use an epinephrine auto-injector if it's available, and call 911 right away if you notice:
 - wheezing or difficulty breathing
 - tightness in throat or chest
 - swelling of the lips, tongue, or face
 - dizziness or fainting
 - nausea or vomiting

If your child has had an allergic reaction to a bee or wasp sting in the past, see your doctor and ask if a prescription for an epinephrine auto-injector is appropriate.

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<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/insect-bite.html?view=ptr&WT.ac=p-ptr>