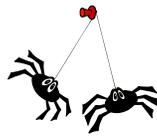


MCLA Health Services

375 Church Street
North Adams, MA 01247
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Self Care Sheet

Bug Bites and Stings

Insect bites and stings are common but occur more often during the summer and early fall when insects are most active. Insect bites can be from a variety of insects: mosquitoes, and flies (horseflies, black flies and greenheads). Honeybees, wasps, hornets and fire ants sting (inject venom with a stinger). Most stinging insects sting when trying to defend themselves (when being swatted at or stepped on.). Most insect bites are fairly harmless. They can cause redness and swelling at the site and sometimes itching, numbness and pain. Insects can carry germs that cause diseases that can be passed on with a bite. Some people are allergic to bites or stings and a severe allergic reaction, anaphylaxis can occur. **Symptoms of anaphylaxis include hives (itchy red welts), wheezing, shortness of breath, problems speaking or swallowing, loss of consciousness and in extreme cases death.** *Anaphylaxis is life threatening that requires immediate emergency medical attention.*

How do I know what to do about a bite or sting?

If you are not allergic you can treat most insect bites yourself.

- ⇒ Remove the stinger as soon as possible you can scrape the stinger out of your skin gently with the edge of a credit card, driver's license or edge of a dull knife. Don't pull or squeeze it as more venom may be released.
- ⇒ Gently wash the affected area with soap and water.
- ⇒ Apply ice to the site for 20 minutes every hour. Be sure to place a cloth between the skin and ice to prevent freezing the skin.
- ⇒ For discomfort use Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Motrin (ibuprofen) as directed for pain or discomfort.
- ⇒ For mild itching and redness use over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream, zinc oxide cream or Calamine lotion. You can also take an antihistamine like Benadryl (diphenhydramine) or Claritin (loratadine) pill for itching.
- ⇒ Avoid further stings by wearing protective clothing, using insect repellent and avoiding infested areas. Remain calm and quiet and avoid excessive movements that may increase the spread of venom after a sting and increase the agitation or the insects.
- ⇒ Keep fingernails trimmed to decrease scratching and prevent skin infection.
- ⇒ If you have a prior history of a serious reaction to a bite or sting take an antihistamine such as Benadryl and seek medical attention as soon as possible.
- ⇒ Ticks should be removed by a medical professional or by someone with experience.

Follow up at Health Services for further evaluation and treatment. If concern regarding a more serious reaction seek medical attention immediately.