



# Stinging Insect Injury Prevention

Stings from insects like bees, wasps, hornets and yellowjackets can cause serious and potentially life-threatening reactions. More than two million Americans are allergic to these types of stings, but even those without a history of allergic reactions can experience a severe response. Employers and employees should take caution where stinging insects are known to make their homes – such as in trees and under roof eaves – in addition to following these sting prevention and response tactics.

## What to Avoid

- Avoid using perfumed soaps, shampoos and deodorants.
- Refrain from wearing cologne or perfume.
- Stay away from flowering plants (if possible).
- Do not swat at an insect.
- Avoid sudden movements if a bee or wasp lands on you.

## What to Wear

### GENERAL

- Wear clean, light-colored and smooth-finished clothing.
- Opt for clothing that covers as much of the body as possible.
- Wear close-toed shoes to protect your feet.
- Tie back long hair to prevent stinging insects from becoming entangled.

### WHEN STINGING INSECTS ARE KNOWN TO BE PRESENT

- Wear a hat with netting to protect your head, neck and shoulders.
- Tape your pants to your boots or socks and your shirt sleeves to your gloves.
- Consider an extra layer of clothing; some insect stings can penetrate a single layer of clothing.

## Food and Drinks

- Pour canned or bottled beverages into wide cups to be able to see if an insect has entered your drink.
- If drinking from a can, keep your thumb over the opening until you have finished the drink. Bees and wasps will frequently crawl into cans of soda.
- Quickly dispose of trash and put away food you're not eating.
- Place trash cans away from any food-dispensing windows or eating areas if either are present.
- Keep food tightly covered and discard scraps immediately.
- Frequently clean any drink-dispensing machines.
- Screen in any food stations.
- Ensure work spaces are kept clean and free of discarded food. Stinging insects thrive where food waste is discarded.
- Clean up fallen fruit from any nearby fruit trees.



## Waste Disposal

- Empty and wash garbage cans regularly.
- Fit garbage cans with tight lids.
- In population-dense areas like amusement parks, garbage cans or dumpsters should be emptied every morning.
- When the garbage contains items like ice cream or juice containers, it should be emptied multiple times per day.

## Before Working at a Site

- Look for signs of stinging insect activity or nesting.
- If multiple insects are flying around, inspect to find where they may be entering or exiting from. You may be able to locate a food source or nest.
- Be aware that the use of power tools like lawnmowers or hedge trimmers may provoke stinging insects.

## Working Near Stinging Insects

- If a single insect is present, remain calm and avoid swatting at it. Most insects will not sting unless they are startled or provoked.
- Ideally, let the insect fly away on its own. If necessary, slowly walk away or gently blow the insect away.
- If a stinging insect gets inside your vehicle, slowly stop the car and leave all windows open until the insect exits the vehicle.
- Workers with previously known histories of allergic reactions to insect bites or stings should carry or have easy access to EpiPens. Additionally, these workers should wear a form of medical identification while working that states their allergy.

## Dealing with Multiple Stinging Insects

- If multiple insects attempt to sting you at once, or if you have disturbed a nest and hear loud buzzing, immediately run to escape them. Try to protect your face with your hands.
- Be aware that bees can attract even more bees via a chemical that is released when they sting.
- If possible, physically move out of the area. Try to go indoors. If you cannot, then head for a shaded area, as they are better for avoiding insects than open areas.
- When attempting to get away from stinging insects, do not enter a body of water. Stinging insects may continue to sting you when you surface for air.

## If You get Stung

- If the stinger is present, remove it using a stiff object like your fingernail or credit card.
- Wash the affected area with soap and water.
- Apply ice and/or anti-itch cream to reduce swelling and itching.
- Take an antihistamine to reduce the effects of the sting.
- If an insect sting victim has a history of allergic reactions or is experiencing difficulty breathing, excessive hives/perspiration and/or the sensation that his or her throat is closing up, call 911 for immediate medical assistance.
- If the sting victim or a trained responder has an EpiPen present, it should be administered immediately.

## Additional Resources

- Laborers' Health and Safety Fund of North America - [Work Safely Around Bees and Other Stinging Insects](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - [Bees, Wasps, and Hornets](#)
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety - [Working Safely around Stinging Insects.](#)
- Mayo Clinic - [Bee Sting Symptoms](#)



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