

INSECT STINGS

(For assistance, please contact EHS at (402) 472-4925, or visit our web site at <http://ehs.unl.edu/>)

Employees who work outdoors are often at increased risk of insect stings. This SOP provides guidance in the prevention and treatment of insect stings.

Prevention

All at-risk employees should receive instruction on safely working around stinging insects and their habitats, to include the following general precautions:

- Wear appropriate work attire. Long pants and long sleeves provide better protection than shorts and sleeveless-shirts. Avoid brightly-colored and patterned materials. Bees are less attracted to persons who wear hats. Wear good, closed-toe work shoes to protect the feet. Work gloves may also be appropriate.
- Be aware of areas where stinging insects are likely to be encountered, such as flower beds, garbage cans, open containers of soda or other sweet liquids, woodpiles, scrap tires, nooks that are protected from the weather and thereby make ideal nesting locations, etc. Approach these areas with caution.
- Loud noises, vibrations, and sudden movements may agitate stinging insects, especially in the vicinity of their nests.
- Do not wear perfumes, hairsprays, or other scented products (i.e., lotions, oils, etc.) that might attract insects.
- Remain calm if a stinging insect comes near. Do not swat at or flail arms around bees. This will only cause them to become more aggressive.
- If the working area is suspected to be frequented by bees or wasps, conduct this work in the early morning or at night when the weather is cooler and the insects are slower and less active. Certain personal protective equipment (PPE) and/or prior treatment with an insecticide may be necessary (i.e., hood, netting, etc.) for work in areas of nests and other infestations.
- Bees and hornets become more aggressive in the fall when weather begins to cool and food supply is reduced.
- Maintain ready access to communication equipment such as cellular phone or two-way radio to summon help in the event of an emergency.

Bodily Reactions to Stings

With rare exception, most adults will suffer a mild localized reaction to an insect sting. This reaction generally consists of pain, redness, localized swelling, and itching at the site of the sting. There is no need for alarm with this type of reaction – it is normal.

However, persons with severe allergies to insect venom or persons who have been stung multiple times may suffer systemic reactions that require medical attention. Specifically, hives and itching on the body at locations away from the bee sting site; swelling of the throat; chest tightness; swelling of the lips or other areas of the body; difficulty breathing; heart palpitation; nausea; vomiting; and fainting.

First Aid

Following are recommended supplies and actions to take in response to an insect sting.

Supplies

- Antiseptic product such as sting relief wipes
- Instant cold packs to apply to the sting site
- Over the counter antihistamines

First Aid

- Examine the site of the sting. If a stinger is present, flick it away or scrape it away using something similar to a credit card. Do not try to squeeze the stinger out of the skin- this may cause the release of more venom.
- Wash the sting site with soap and water. Treat the wound with a topical antiseptic.
- Apply an ice pack for additional relief. Antihistamines may also provide additional relief.
- Seek medical attention if experiencing signs of a systemic reaction, if stung in the eye or inside of the mouth, or if suffering from numerous stings.

The above supplies and first aid measures should be modified for individuals known to have severe allergies to insect stings. In these cases, the affected individual may, in consultation with their medical provider, consider carrying a personal supply of epi-pens. These devices are available by prescription only and must be administered by trained personnel. Epi-pens lose their effectiveness when stored above room temperature.