

SAFETY TIP OF THE WEEK

ZERO HARM

Warm Weather Months invariably include days at the beach, picnics in the backyard, softball games and other outdoor activities. This increased time outdoors also means we will be communing more with six- and eight-legged critters.

Most of them are harmless and couldn't hurt us even if they wanted to. A few though, are equipped with poisonous weapons of pain. And whether from a wasp, bee, spider, ant or scorpion-- most people have felt this pain.

Thankfully, insect and arachnid stings or bites rarely cause death. (Between 40 and 50 deaths per year in the US.) Yet they do cause an incredible amount of pain and suffering. (According to the National Center of Health Statistics, nearly 37 percent of US children will sooner or later require hospital treatment for bee, wasp, hornet or yellow jacket stings and spider bites.)

Here are some facts and tips about the biting and stinging community around us and what to do if you get stung:

- More people die from insect stings than from spider bites. The reason for this is that spider fangs are quite fragile and more people are sensitive to the much more piercing stings of bees, hornets, ants, and wasps.
- Two ways to avoid being stung at your next outing:
 - 1) Not smelling like a flower by avoiding sweet smelling colognes, and
 - 2) Not looking like a flower by wearing white or neutral colors.
- Planning to clean out your attic or crawl space? Use a flashlight and scan dark musty areas before you reach into them. Even after you've checked the area out, keep alert to spiders, centipedes and scorpions. Also, wear tight fitting clothing and gloves. It may be a bit uncomfortable, but you'll wish you had if a Brown Recluse spider bites you.
- Never swat at a bee that is near you. If you do this, you will often make it very upset. If you decide to run away, it will often chase you ready to attack. If one does land on you, don't panic. Just slowly brush it off of you until it flies away.

If You're Stung

As you'd expect, most people who've been stung know it. The most common symptoms are limited areas of pain and swelling, with redness and itching. Beyond that the symptoms of bee and wasp stings vary, depending on where you're stung and how sensitive you are to the sting.

If you do get stung, heeding the following advice will help reduce the pain and discomfort:

1. Gently scrape out the stinger as soon as possible.
2. Don't pull or squeeze the stinger. It contains venom, and you'll end up re-stinging yourself. (This applies to honeybees only; yellow jackets, wasps, and hornets do not usually lose their stingers.)
3. Clean the sting area with soapy water.
4. Apply a paste made of meat tenderizer to the sting area. It seems to break down the protein in the venom.
5. Apply ice to the sting immediately; it will minimize discomfort and prevent swelling and itching.
6. Take aspirin or acetaminophen for the pain, and/or antihistamine for the itching and swelling (provided you don't have to avoid these drugs for medical reasons).
7. If you're stung in the mouth or tongue, get medical help fast--swelling could close off your airway.