

Insect Bites and Stings

Most stings from bees, wasps and hornets cause pain and slight swelling but have little other effect. However, some people are allergic to stings and can develop reactions that can be life-threatening. Call an ambulance immediately if you suspect an allergic reaction soon after being stung.

Insect bites (not stings) rarely cause serious allergic reactions but can cause small itchy lumps to appear on the skin. Itch may be eased by a soothing ointment, antihistamine tablets, or steroid cream.

Tick Bites

The tick usually clings to the skin. Remove the tick as soon as possible after the bite, using fine tweezers or fingernails to grab the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull it gently and slowly straight out and try not to squeeze the body of the tick. Clean the site of the bite with disinfectant.

See a doctor if you develop a rash which spreads out from a tick bite over the following week or so. Also, if you develop an unexplained high temperature (fever) within a month of the tick bite. These symptoms may be the first sign of Lyme disease and need checking out.

When should I seek medical help?

Contact your GP or call [NHS 111](#) for advice if:

- you're worried about a bite or sting
- your symptoms don't start to improve within a few days or are getting worse
- you've been stung or bitten in your mouth or throat, or near your eyes
- a large area (around 10cm or more) around the bite becomes red and swollen
- you have symptoms of a wound infection, such as pus or increasing pain, swelling or redness
- you have symptoms of a more widespread infection, such as a fever, [swollen glands](#) and other [flu-like symptoms](#)

Patient Info <https://patient.info/health/insect-bites-and-stings-leaflet>

NHS Choices <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/insect-bites-and-stings/>