

Idaho Falls Pediatrics

Bee or Yellow Jacket Stings

What is a sting?

Honey bees, bumble bees, hornets, wasps, and yellow jackets can all sting. Over 95% of bee stings are by yellow jackets. These stings cause immediate painful red bumps. While the pain is usually better in 2 hours, the swelling may increase for up to 24 hours.

Multiple stings (more than 10) can cause vomiting, diarrhea, a headache, and fever. This reaction is related to the amount of venom received. It is not an allergic reaction, which would cause trouble breathing, trouble swallowing, hives, or passing out.

How can I take care of my child?

- **Treatment**

If you see a little black dot in the bite, the stinger is still present (this only occurs with honey bee stings). Remove it by scraping it off. If only a small fragment remains, it will come out on its own. Then rub each sting for 20 minutes with a cotton ball soaked in a meat tenderizer/water solution. (Avoid in the area around the eye.) This will neutralize the venom and relieve the pain. If meat tenderizer is not available, apply an aluminum-based deodorant or a baking soda solution for 20 minutes. For persistent pain, massage with an ice cube for 10 minutes. Give acetaminophen immediately for relief of pain and burning. For itching, apply hydrocortisone cream.

- **Prevention**

Some bee stings can be prevented by avoiding gardens and orchards and by not going barefoot. Teach children not to disturb beehives or hornet nests. Insect repellents are not effective against these stinging insects.

When should I call Idaho Falls Pediatrics?

Call IMMEDIATELY (or call 911) if:

- Breathing or swallowing is difficult.

Call during office hours if:

- The swelling continues to spread after 24 hours.
- Swelling of the hand (or foot) spreads past the wrist (or ankle).
- You have other questions or concerns.

*NOTE: This information is provided as a public educational service. The information does not replace any of the instructions your physician gives you. If you have a medical emergency please call the Hospital at (208) 529-6111. If you have questions about your child's care, please call Idaho Falls Pediatrics at (208) 522-4600.