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SPECIALIZING IN THE EVALUATION
AND MANAGEMENT OF
ALLERGIES AND ASTHMA
IN ADULTS AND CHILDREN

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INSECT ALLERGY

DECREASE YOUR CHANCES OF BEING STUNG

1. Watch where you are going. Wasps build cones in sheltered places, especially under porches and eaves. Wasps may also nest on fences or around boat docks. Hornets can build oval paper nests suspended well above the ground. Yellow jackets have a habit of nesting in the ground, under rocks, or in walls of buildings. If you see more than two yellow jackets or bees close to the ground surface, pause for a moment to see what they do or where they go. If they suddenly vanish into the fall leaves or grass, be cautious, their nest may be close by. Bees and wasps usually sting only when their nests are threatened or when they are actually touched.

Activities with particular risk include; tampering in any way with wasp nests or yellow jacket burrows. This may accidentally occur when mowing the lawn, cutting flowers, trimming hedges or shrubs, or painting a house. Wasps and yellow jackets search for food around open soda cans, trash or garbage cans. Picnic grounds and clover fields are favorite gathering places for these insects too. Never go barefoot or wear sandals outdoors.

2. Avoid fast, jerky motion; it excites insects. If you are “buzzed” by a bee or wasp, never flail at it with your arms. Instead, stop or keep walking slowly. Stinging insects are more apt to attack a fast-moving object than a stationary or slow-moving one. (Sometimes, however, one must run for safety, as when a large nest is disturbed.)

3. Wear light-colored clothing when out (picnicking, walking in the woods, etc.) Bees are extremely color-sensitive. Dark shades, especially brown, black and dark red, seem to anger them; floral prints also can attract bees. As every beekeeper knows, white or khaki clothing seldom bothers them. Loose-fitting clothing, such as head scarves and billowing skirts, are undesirable because a bee or wasp may become trapped in these.

4. Do not apply anything that has a sweet odor to your body (such as hair sprays, oils, perfumes or colognes). Bees and wasps sense sweet odors easily. Hair oils and perfumes which contain floral odors attract them. If a bee or wasp becomes entangled in human hair, its first reaction is to sting. Shower with nonperfumed soaps.

5. Spray picnic area or other dangerous areas beforehand. To avoid having yellow jackets and bees gather at a picnic table, spray area beforehand with a fast acting insecticide. Avoid insecticide sprays containing pyrethrum, as this chemical can aggravate allergy symptoms. Keep a can of insecticide in the kitchen to be used to spray the trash and garbage can area, in the glove compartment of the automobile and nearby when working outdoors for use when an insect approaches you.

6. Call an exterminator. Don't do it yourself. Be sure there are no nests of yellow jackets, bees, or other wasps in the immediate area of your house, garden, or lawn. Don't try to dispose of the nest by yourself. It is a tricky business, requiring expert use of insecticides. One mistake can unleash scores of angry stinging insects.

7. Medical therapy of insect allergy will be discussed by your physician. Injectable adrenaline (EPIPEN), antihistamines, or medicated sprays may be used to counter the allergy reaction. A program of emergency treatment appropriate for your specific condition will be prescribed. Please ask questions if you do not understand any part of your medical program. Allergy injection therapy may also be included in your treatment program. Allergy injections attempt to reduce the degree or amount of allergy reaction that you get when stung. Allergy injections are often very effective, although not always completely so. Also a period of months is required to build up your immunity. Therefore, you should “play it safe” and always have your emergency medicines available to treat sting reactions.