

FAIRFIELD COUNTY ALLERGY, ASTHMA & IMMUNOLOGY ASSOCIATES, P.C.

ADULT AND PEDIATRIC ALLERGY, ASTHMA AND CLINICAL IMMUNOLOGY

DIPLOMATES OF THE AMERICAN BOARD OF ALLERGY & IMMUNOLOGY

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INSECT ALLERGY

Allergic reactions to the stings of certain insects can give rise to a wide range of disturbances. The group to which these insects belong is called hymenoptera, which is derived from the Greek, meaning “membraned wing.” This group includes bees, wasps, hornets, yellow jackets and the rare fire ant. It is important to note that an allergic reaction to one of this group implies sensitivity also to the other members.

TYPES OF REACTIONS

- 1. Local Reactions** This type is by far the most common. They are secondary to the local injection of venom and usually are not of an allergic nature. The area of the sting is surrounded by pain, redness and swelling.
- 2. Toxic Reactions** These reactions usually result from multiple stings, which in the absence of allergic sensitivity may produce serious disturbances. This response is due to the large amount of venom injected. It is often difficult to distinguish this reaction from an allergic response if the history of multiple stings is not known.
- 3. Allergic Reactions** This reaction results usually from a single sting. It occurs within minutes (However, cases of delayed reactions have been reported). The symptoms range from a few hives to generalized swelling, from fainting to severe shock and death.

TREATMENT OF THE ALLERGIC REACTION

Immediate: A PERSON KNOWN TO BE ALLERGIC TO INSECT STINGS SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE AVAILABLE AN INSECT STING KIT. This kit should contain: (A) a syringe with injectable Adrenaline, and (B) an antihistamine medication. They should be used as soon as possible, according to instructions. The individual should then be taken to the nearest emergency room.

Long Range: The long-range treatment revolves around prevention of insect stings and development of a level of immunity through hyposensitization (allergy injections).

Prevention: This involves avoidance of areas where these insects are dwelling such as stagnant water, picnic areas, hedge clipping, flowering bushes and orchards when trees are blossoming or fruit is fermenting. In dressing, avoid bright and flowery garments. Avoid also dark, rough clothes. Clothing should be plain and light. Loose-fitting clothes that may entrap insects should also be avoided. Shoes must be worn at all times outdoors. Perfumes, hair sprays, tonic and all other scented lotions should be avoided. Inspection of the home and premises during the spring and summer months should be done on a regular basis to root out early nests. Garbage areas should be kept meticulously clean.

Hyposensitization: This form of therapy has been proven to be effective in providing a level of protection against the allergic reactions secondary to insect stings. Injections are given weekly until a maintenance dose has been achieved. They then may be spaced monthly to every six weeks.