

Hanford Environmental Health Foundation offers advice to prevent and treat bites and stings



HEHF Health Education Services staff

American journalist Bill Vaughn once said, “When the insects take over the world we hope they will remember, with gratitude, how we took them along on all our picnics.”

In the meantime, we are in the warmest part of the year and animals and insects are in their most active time of the year. Our recent mild winters have contributed to a large population of insects, arachnids and snakes. Whether they are looking for shelter, a meal or a mate, or just trying to get away from humans, we need to take care this summer, our active time of year.

Knowing how to prevent and treat bites and stings is very important, especially with the added worry of disease transmittal or the potential of allergic and other adverse health reactions.

As always, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, so take measures to prevent bites and stings from occurring. The following suggestions on avoiding bites and stings are categorized by creature and are followed by symptoms and treatment for bites and stings:



Mosquitoes

- Empty any containers that can collect water.
- Change water in birdbaths, fountains and troughs at least weekly.
- Keep roof gutters clean to prevent collection of standing water.
- Maintain window and door screens to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home or workplace.
- Stay indoors at dawn and at dusk, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and a hat when entering woods or wetlands.
- Use mosquito repellent containing DEET, following the directions on the label, as necessary and with care.

Symptoms and treatment

Mosquito bites often cause minor swelling, redness, pain and itching. Most of these symptoms will heal within a few days without the need for medical atten-

tion. Use an ice pack and elevate the bite area to reduce swelling. Over-the-counter medication, such as Benadryl or hydrocortisone cream, will relieve the symptoms as well.

Although at present the chances for a human to contract West Nile or other mosquito-borne illnesses is very low, if you develop symptoms of fever, chills, nausea, severe headache, increased muscle aches, muscle stiffness or fatigue within 5 to 15 days after being bitten, you are strongly advised to seek medical care for evaluation and treatment.

Bees, wasps, yellow jackets

- Do not wear bright-colored, flower-print, or rough-textured clothing, all of which can attract bees.
- Do not use fragrances or scented soaps if you plan to be in an area where bees, wasps or yellow jackets might be present.
 - Avoid gardens, trees with ripe fruit, and flowers.
 - Do not swat at a bee or throw an object at a hive. Bees, wasps and yellow jackets are more likely to attack when threatened or provoked.
 - If you find yourself in or near a swarm, move away slowly and with deliberate movements.

Symptoms and treatment

Symptoms of bee stings are similar to symptoms of mosquito bites. In treating the bee sting, first determine if the stinger is still present in the skin, and if so, remove the stinger with tweezers. Once the stinger is removed, gently wash the affected area with soap and water. If any swelling occurs take 25 to 50 milligrams of Benadryl. Benadryl can cause drowsiness, so be sure to follow the label directions and do not drive or operate heavy machinery. An effective home remedy to soothe the sting area is to apply meat tenderizer or a paste made of baking soda and water. A lotion with calamine or aloe vera will relieve burning or itching.

Ticks

- Avoid tick-infested areas — such as tall grass or dense wooded areas — especially during the months of May, June and July.

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- If you need to enter a wooded area or tall grass, wear long pants and long socks and tuck the pant cuffs into the long socks.
- Wear white or lighter-colored clothing so you can see ticks.
- Carefully inspect yourself for ticks upon leaving a tick-infested area.
- Use insect repellent containing DEET, following the directions on the label, as necessary and with care.

Symptoms and treatment

Bites from ticks, particularly if the tick is no longer present, may have symptoms of itching accompanied by an affected area that can be anything from a small nodule to an extensive ulcer. Fever, chills and fatigue may also result from the bite. The bite area will tend to heal within a week or two. Most often, though, the tick will still be present at or near the location of the bite and you will need to remove it. If the tick is present and its head is not buried in the skin, use tweezers, grasping the tick as close to its mouth as possible, and slowly and steadily pull it straight out. If the head is buried in the skin, apply some Permanone insect repellent on and around the tick (using a cotton swab). This will force the tick to relax, and then you can remove it without the risk of breaking off its head and causing infection.

Because of the potential for Lyme disease and other tick-borne illness, visit a physician to determine that you do not have any other illness or hidden symptoms that require further treatment. Medical attention is also recommended if the bite area expands or becomes infected.

Spiders

- Do not put your hands or legs in places that have not been visually inspected first.
- If you need to work on or near rock piles, wood or dark areas, wear gloves.
- Practice good housekeeping and clear away debris to minimize the places spiders may hide.
- Check bedding before getting into bed.
- Check and shake out shoes before putting them on.
- Plug or seal openings and crevices into the house.
- Consider spraying an appropriate insecticide on any



This unwelcome rattlesnake was discovered and photographed just outside T Plant three years ago. HEHF advises that you move slowly and deliberately if you encounter a snake, and do not attempt to handle it. Most snakes will retreat, rather than attack, if given the opportunity.

high-risk areas, such as webs, woodpiles, around baseboards and window areas, attics and closets.

Snakes

- Avoid areas where snakes may be present. Most snakes will attempt to retreat, so if you encounter a snake, give it room to escape.
- If you encounter a snake, remain at a safe distance; move slowly and deliberately.
- Do not attempt to provoke or handle a snake.
- Be aware of the warning signs that a snake may bite. It will first try to flee, and then make warning noises (hissing, rattling). Its final warning is that it will coil up into an S-shaped position — a sign that it is readying to strike.
- Wear boots and coarse clothing when traveling through areas where snakes may be present.

Symptoms and treatment

Bites from snakes and spiders present much of the same symptoms — swelling, redness and pain — as a mosquito bite. However, given the potential for release of venom into the bite, prompt care from a physician is recommended. If you are bitten, you should remain calm and comfortable and limit your activity as much as possible. Spider-bite wounds can be cleansed with an antiseptic. The body area where the snakebite is located should be positioned at a level below the heart if at all possible. Being able to provide a description of the spi-

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der or snake (if possible) is recommended, so the physician can treat the bite appropriately.

Severe reactions

With all bites and stings, there is the very real possibility that a person can experience more severe health reactions. Some of the more common severe reactions include the following:



- Severe allergic reaction, indicated by shock, coughing or wheezing, widespread swelling, lightheadedness, nausea or hives
- Large skin reaction spreading beyond the immediate site of the bite or sting
- Skin infection at or around the bite or sting.

In these cases, immediate treatment by a physician is required. Call 9-1-1 or get to an emergency room as soon as possible.

People at risk for severe reactions from bites and stings usually have existing health conditions, medications or lifestyle choices that interfere with their body's ability to heal and fight off infection. Some of these factors include the following:

- Age — 60 or older, or an infant or young child
- Past severe allergic reaction or large skin infection
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Smoking or other tobacco use
- Angiotensin-converting-enzyme (ACE)-inhibitor medications, such as Capoten, Vasotec, Prinivil, or Zestril
- Beta-blocker medications, such as Inderal or Lopressor
- Corticosteroids, such as prednisone
- Chemotherapy or radiation therapy
- Diseases — either existing or a history of — cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, HIV, or lung disease (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or asthma). ■

Bites and Stings safety presentations available

Fluor Hanford Safety and Hanford Environmental Health Foundation will give "Bites and Stings" presentations during August at the following work sites.

Date	Area	Building	Room	Time
Wednesday, Aug. 20	100K	MO-293		7:30-8:30 a.m.
	200W	MO-278		10-11 a.m.
	200E	2101-M	Bijou Room	1-2 p.m.
Thursday, Aug. 21	300	3763		1-2 p.m.
Friday, Aug. 22	400	4706	Room 302	10-11 a.m.
Wednesday, Aug. 27		Federal Building	Room 142	1-2 p.m.
Thursday, Aug. 28		2420 Stevens Center	Room 153	1-2 p.m.

Attendance at one of these presentations will meet the requirement for August safety meetings for Fluor Hanford employees. Fluor Hanford workgroups that cannot attend the scheduled presentations or other Hanford Site contractor workgroups wishing to use this presentation as part of safety meetings may call HEHF Health Education Services at 373-3729 to schedule a time. For further information, please call Carol Powe, Fluor Safety, at 376-8886, or Judi Staley, HEHF Health Education Services, at 372-0097.