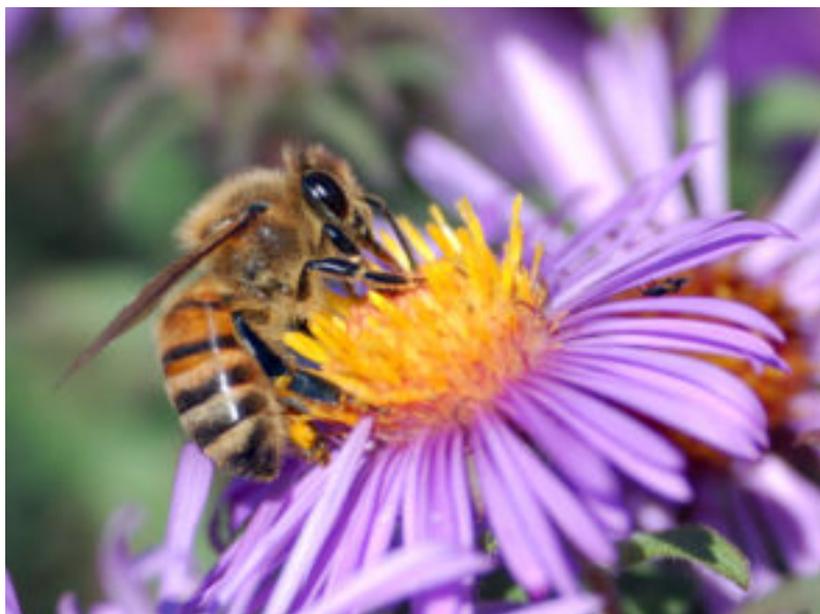


# BITES & STINGS

## ALLERGIC REACTIONS



Prevention is better than cure when it comes to allergic reactions to bites and stings.

### WHAT IS ALLERGY?

Allergy occurs when a person's immune system reacts to substances in the environment that are usually harmless to most people.

These substances are known as allergens. Examples of allergens include house dust mites, pollen, mould, and pet dander.

### WHAT CAN TRIGGER ALLERGIC REACTIONS?

We all find the itch of a mosquito bite, or the pain of a bee sting very unpleasant, yet for some it can trigger an allergic reaction. Fortunately severe allergic reactions are uncommon, but even a mild reaction can be very uncomfortable.

#### BITES

March flies and mosquitoes cause nasty, itchy bites, while caterpillars cause severe irritation from touching their spines. Fortunately, allergic reactions are rarely serious, even if the swelling is large.

#### STINGS

Allergies to venoms from stinging insects are a common cause of serious allergic reactions in Australia.

The usual culprits are:

- Honey bees
- European wasps and paper wasps
- Jack jumper ants (a very aggressive black bull-ant found in SE Australia)
- Green ants (found in Queensland)
- Native Australian bees.

If you have ever had more than just a small reaction to a sting, such as hives on another part of your body, see your doctor for an allergy check up. You may need an allergy action plan, which helps you recognise the seriousness of a reaction and tells you what to do in response.

### PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

Bites from midges and mosquitoes are best avoided by covering up as much as possible. Avoid being outdoors in the early morning or at dusk, and use an insect repellent containing DEET.

Stings often occur on bare feet. People with allergies should wear shoes outside, and gloves, long sleeves and long pants when gardening.

Nightly checks for ticks may help. If someone with a known tick allergy is bitten, seek medical help before removing the tick as allergic reactions often happen as the tick is removed.

Honey bees normally only sting in self-defence. Minimise perfumes, and avoid bright colours and floral prints. White or pale-coloured clothing is best.

Wasps are more aggressive than bees and are attracted to food and drink. Avoid provoking them and don't drink "blindly" from drink cans when outside.