



101 Critical Days of Summer

Safety Tip #10 – Allergic?

At least one out of every 5 Americans suffers from allergies. Common causes of allergy symptoms include food allergies such as peanut allergy or milk allergy, and seasonal allergies resulting from grass, weed, tree pollen, or various molds. Cat allergies and dog allergies can also cause miserable symptoms such as itchy eyes, sneezing, nasal congestion, and wheezing. Allergic skin conditions can cause a rash and itchy skin.

An allergy is a reaction of your immune system to something that does not bother most other people. People who have allergies often are sensitive to more than one thing.

In Summertime, the Livin' Can Be Buggy



Its summer, which means millions of Americans will be picnicking in grassy fields and camping in the woods.

By all means, go out and enjoy the weather, says the American College of Emergency Physicians. But keep in mind that spending more time outdoors puts you at risk of getting bitten by bugs.

Most insect and spider bites are harmless, though they feel unpleasant. Bee, wasp, and hornet stings and fire ant bites usually hurt. Mosquito, flea and mite bites usually itch.

"The bite itself may be nothing more than a minor annoyance," said Dr. Nick Jouriles, president of the American College of Emergency Physicians, in a news release. "It's the disease that insects carry that can become a serious medical problem."

Ticks can carry **Lyme** disease. In 70 to 80 percent of cases, the first symptom is a bull's eye-shaped skin rash, which shows up between three and 30 days after the bite, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Lyme disease can also cause fatigue, chills, fever, headache, muscle and joint aches, and swollen lymph nodes.

Though highly treatable with antibiotics when caught early, left untreated, Lyme disease can spread to other parts of the body, causing debilitating problems such as severe headaches and neck stiffness from meningitis, shooting pains, heart palpitations, dizziness and joint swelling.

Ticks can also carry **Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever**. Though not as common as Lyme disease, it can be more severe, according to the American College of Emergency Physicians.

Symptoms can include sudden fever, headache, excessive sweating, severe muscle aches, weakness, nausea and vomiting, and a rash on the hands, feet, arms or ankles about five to 10 days after being bitten.

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is also treatable with antibiotics.

As protection, check regularly for ticks and shower after potential exposure.

If you've been bitten, remove the tick by pulling it straight up with tweezers or between your fingertips if tweezers are not available. If possible, store the tick in a sealed plastic bag in your freezer.

If you develop any symptoms, you and the tick should be tested for Lyme disease right away, experts recommend.



"The mosquito is the state bird of New Jersey!" (Andy Warhol)

For the most part, mosquitoes are just a warm-weather nuisance, although some people can have a severe allergic reaction to bites and require emergency treatment.



Mosquitoes can also carry **West Nile** virus. About 80 percent of people who are infected with West Nile virus show no symptoms, but a few develop a high fever, headache, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, vision loss, numbness and paralysis, according to the CDC.

Mosquitoes can also transmit **Encephalitis**, an inflammation of the brain. To protect against bites, wear insect repellent, especially at night. Repellents containing DEET are highly effective, but repellent used on children should contain no more than 10 percent DEET. Never put DEET on infants.



Steps you can take to prevent getting bitten include:

- Staying inside at dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active, or wearing long-sleeved pants and shirts when outside during those hours
- Making sure window screens are in good condition
- Avoid standing near stagnant pools of water, trash cans, and gardens where flowers are in bloom
- When possible keep your arms and legs covered and wear shoes at all times.
- If a bee or wasp comes near you do not try to hit it, move away slowly. If the insect lands on you keep calm the insect will usually fly away after a few seconds.
- If you notice many wasps or bees and suspect that there may be a nest nearby call a pest control expert to remove the nest. Do not try to remove the nest yourself.
- If you eat outside check the area first to be sure there are no wasps or bees before you start eating.
- Food attracts insects thus avoid garbage containers and keep food covered. Look at what you are eating before you take a bite or a sip of a drink since insects can slip into food and even into open drink cans. Crumbs or drink residue left on your face will attract insects.
- Avoid using strong perfumes during the summer. Other cosmetic or hygiene products with fragrance added may attract insects.
- Avoid using noisy equipment near insect nest sites if possible.

What are the symptoms of a serious reaction that requires medical attention?

- Itching or skin reaction away from the sting site
- Skin rash away from the sting site
- Trouble breathing or wheezing
- Swelling of the tongue or mouth area
- Weakness or fainting
- Anxiety or confusion
- Chest pain
- Nausea, cramps, or vomiting



If the stung individual has a known allergy to insect stings they should seek medical attention immediately. One sting can be fatal in these individuals! People who have a known allergy to insect stings should carry medical identification specifying the allergy, as well as, an injectable epinephrine (EpiPen) device.

How should I treat a stinger injury?

- Remove the stinger as quickly as possible since the stinger may continue to inject venom even if the bee has been killed or knocked away
- Some authorities suggest scraping away the stinger (i.e. using a credit card) rather than pinching to avoid injecting more of the venom in the stinger
- Tweezers may be needed to remove the stinger.
- Clean the wound with soap and water
- Apply ice or cool packs
- Elevate the stung extremity to limit swelling
- If the last tetanus immunization was more than 5 years ago an update is needed

You know you are itching to go outside and have fun. So get out there and don't let the bugs bug you, but bee careful!!

Your Risk Management Staff

This document was derived from multiple sources. Sources are available upon request in the 157 ARW/SE Office.