



# Bites and Stings

## The most common causes of severe bite and sting allergy in Australia are:

- Bee sting (honey bee and native Australian bees)
- Wasp sting (paper wasp and European wasp)
- Ant sting (jack jumper, green-head, bulldog ants)

Other insects such as ticks, caterpillars, March flies and even bedbugs can trigger anaphylaxis but are less common.

Individuals can have a range of allergic reactions to stings bites but not all are serious. Those at greatest risk of serious allergic reactions to insect stings are those who have experienced symptoms involving the heart and blood vessels and/or symptoms involving breathing difficulty following a sting previously. Adults are at greater risk of anaphylactic reactions from insect stings than children. Any child or adult who has experienced a reaction away from the actual site of the sting e.g. hives all over the body should be referred to an allergy specialist for investigation.

## MANAGEMENT

Individuals at risk of bite and sting anaphylaxis should wear a medical identification necklace/bracelet and have an Action Plan for Anaphylaxis and an adrenaline auto injector close by. Like food allergy, there are several actions or strategies that can help reduce the risk of a bite or sting but we can never make an environment risk free. If we know someone is at risk of bite or sting anaphylaxis we must always be prepared for an emergency situation..

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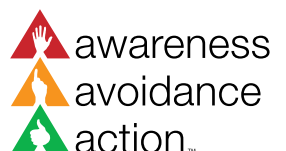
[www.allergyfacts.org.au](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au)

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## Strategies to reduce risk in any environment include:

- ▲ Using insect repellents that contain DEET (Diethyltoluamide, N, N - diethyl - 3-methylbenzamide)
- ▲ Wearing light coloured clothing that covers most exposed skin
- ▲ Avoid wearing clothing with 'flower' type prints
- ▲ Wearing shoes at all times
- ▲ Avoiding perfumes or body creams/deodorants which have a scent
- ▲ Wearing gloves when gardening
- ▲ Avoid picking up rubbish which may attract insects
- ▲ Being extra careful where there are bodies of water i.e. lake/pond/swimming pool. Chlorinated pools attract bees
- ▲ Drive with windows up in the car or windows closed in a bus
- ▲ Keep your drink (glass/bottle/can) indoors or covered. Always check your drinks before you sip
- ▲ Keep garbage bins covered – lids on
- ▲ Keep grass areas mowed (reduce weed such as clover which attracts insects)
- ▲ Wear boots and thick clothing such as denim jeans if ant sting allergic and in an area known to have specific ant. Avoid ant mounds
- ▲ Not provoking bees, wasps or ants
- ▲ Have mounds/nests removed by professionals
- ▲ Those at risk of anaphylaxis to ticks should have them removed by a doctor.

See ASCIA information on tick allergy <http://www.allergy.org.au/content/view/124/151/>  
Severe allergic reactions to bites and stings are usually lifelong. Some people who have severe insect sting allergy may be able to access effective treatment called immunotherapy. Those who are allergic to bee or wasp stings can discuss a 3-5 year program, which can help 'switch off' the allergic reaction, with a recognised specialist in the field of clinical immunology and allergy. Currently a venom immunotherapy program for jack jumper ant is available in Tasmania with the support of the Tasmanian government. This life altering treatment which greatly reduces the risk of potentially life threatening allergic reactions after long term treatment is not available in other states due to lack of government funding at time of this publication.

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