

Insect Bites and Stings

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It is that time of year for “fun in the sun”, and individuals who enjoy outdoor activities or spend time in their yard, as well as those whose occupation requires them to remain outdoors, are at risk for insect bites and stings. Insect bites and stings are common. Almost all victims of insect bites experience local reactions at the injury site. The most common “bugs” that a person encounters during the warm summer months are mosquitoes, ticks, bees, and spiders.

General Treatment Approach

Application of an ice pack may provide sufficient relief of pain and irritation. If that does not work, applying topical pain relievers to the site should relieve symptoms. Patients should avoid scratching the bite/sting because this could open the wound and could lead to a secondary systemic bacterial infection. For children, trimming their fingernails may prevent further injury from scratching. Self-treatment of insect bites with a non-prescription product is appropriate if the reaction is confined to the site and the patient is older than 2 years of age.

Non-Pharmacologic Therapy

- **Avoidance of insects:** cover skin as much as possible with clothing, hats, and shoes; cuffing clothing around ankles, wrists, and neck; avoiding swamps, dense woods, and brush that harbors ticks, mosquitoes, and other insects. Keep pets free of pests. Remove standing water, when possible to reduce breeding areas for mosquitoes.



- **Insect Repellents:** useful in preventing bites from insects such as mosquitoes, fleas, and ticks, but these products are not effective in repelling stinging insects, such as bees.
- **DEET:** the best all-purpose repellent. It protects the skin against insect bites. It does not kill insects. The volatile repellent, when applied to skin or clothing, releases vapors that tend to discourage the approach of insects.

Pharmacologic Therapy:

Many of these products can be purchased in combination to treat multiple indications.

- **Local Anesthetics:** approved for the use on burns, sunburns, minor cuts, insect bites, and minor skin irritation to relieve pain and itching.
 - Benzocaine
 - Pramoxine
 - Benzyl alcohol
 - Lidocaine
 - Dibucaine
 - Phenol
- **Topical Anti-histamines:** approved for temporary relief of pain and itching related to minor burns; sunburns; insect bites; poison oak, ivy, and sumac; and minor skin irritation.
 - Diphenhydramine (Benadryl ®) HCL 0.5% - 2%; the agent used in most products that contain a topical antihistamine
- **Hydrocortisone:** indicated for temporary relief of minor skin irritations, itching, and rashes caused by dermatitis, insect bites, poison ivy/oak/sumac, soaps, cosmetics, and jewelry.
- **Counterirritants:**
 - Camphor: relieves itching and irritation; however, camphor-containing products can be very dangerous if ingested. Keep away from children.
 - Menthol: provides pain-relief and relieves itching.



Talk to your physician or pharmacist to help find the product best for you!

Sun Protection

The summer months are here and it is shaping up to be a hot one! We at ProAct wanted to help you and your family prepare to have a safe and enjoyable summer season.

Excess sun exposure is responsible for many skin problems, including sunburn, age spots, scaly growths, wrinkles, freckles, and allergic rashes. Most importantly, it is the major cause of skin cancer, including melanoma. It is important for everyone to be aware of the sun's damaging effects and take measures to avoid overexposures.

Although many people enjoy the appearance of tanned skin and think it looks "healthy", tanned skin is damaged skin. The UV radiation in sunlight penetrates the deepest layers of the skin where it harms the cells. The body responds by making more pigment to try to protect itself, but the damage has already happened and may be permanent. The more exposure you have to the sun, the more likely you are to develop skin problems later in life.

Sun Protection

The most effective way to avoid sun damage is to stay out of the sun as much as possible. If you cannot avoid being exposed to sunlight, there are five basic sun defenses that you should keep in mind when you go outdoors:

- Avoid peak hours of sunlight [10am— 4pm]
- Sunscreen
- Clothing
- Sunglasses
- Shade



Sunscreen

Sunscreens are rated by the amount of protection they provide from ultra-violet rays, measured as the "Sun Protection Factor" or SPF. Sunscreens with a higher SPF provide greater protection from the sun. It is best to use sunscreens that offer a minimum of SPF 15. Sun care products contain varying levels of protection up to SPF 100+. SPF is an indicator of the time needed to cause a sunburn vs. unprotected skin, however all sunscreens should be regularly reapplied.

SPF: Is more really better?

The SPF value however can be deceiving and many consumers often think that SPF is twice as protective as SPF 15, or that applying SPF 15 twice will provide similar protection as SPF 30 applied once.

Neither of these myths are true. In fact, current guidelines only recommend application of SPF 15 for most individuals. For those with fair skin, prone to burning, or children; a SPF 30 or 45 product may be appropriate.

A SPF 30 product actually blocks ~97% of the UV rays, while SPF 45 blocks ~98%. Therefore applying any product claiming SPF protection greater than 50 provides little increased protection compared to SPF 45.

More Helpful Tips

- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes prior to being exposed to the sun and reapply every two hours. Consider using a water-resistant sunscreen if you will be active (sweating) or in the water.
- Be aware of the terms "waterproof", "sweat-proof", or "all-day-protection" because while some products may be sweat-resistant or water-resistant, none can withstand prolonged periods of either.
- Use sun block on your lips
- Wear a broad-rimmed hat when outdoors
- Wear tightly woven, dark clothing to cover your arms, legs, and feet
- Stay in the shade when possible
- Avoid reflective surfaces, such as water or snow
- Avoid sunbathing
- Don't be fooled by cloudy days since damaging rays can penetrate clouds

Generic Switch Program

Our Clinical Pharmacist thought you should know that these brand medications have a generic alternative that could save you money.

Studies have been shown that at the appropriate dose, each of these products has a generic alternative that has been proven to be just as safe and effective.

We will even contact your doctor for you to see if the switch is right for you! Not only will you save on your generic medication with each filling, but for eligible members using our mail order facility, you may qualify for your first 90 days free of charge! All it takes is one phone call to find out how much money you can start saving today!

Taking any of these?

Lipitor, Vytorin, Crestor, Lescol, Diovan,
Benicar, Avapro, Micardis, Avalide, Atacand,
Nexium, Aciphex, Zegerid

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