

## Self Treatment for Insect Bites & Stings



An insect bite is a puncture wound caused by an insect such as bee or wasp. Fluid in the insect bite produces local inflammation reaction and sometimes body wide effects. Most insects in the UK do not transmit diseases. The main exception to this is a type of tick which can cause Lyme disease.

### The symptoms of an insect bite:

- Pain sometimes from the bite mark.
- Irritation and itch over the site of the bite.
- A small itchy lump which may develop up to 24 hours after a bite. This typically lasts for several days before fading away. Sometimes there may be redness around the lump.
- A weal which is like a small fluid-filled lump and is very itchy. It may develop immediately after being bitten. A weal lasts about 2 hours, but is often followed by a small itchy solid lump. This can last for several days before fading away.

### Self treatment after such a bite:

- If there is a localised allergic reaction take an antihistamine immediately. Continue these until any swelling stops. (Antihistamines block the action of histamine which is a chemical that is released by the body during allergic reactions).
- Use a cold compress to ease pain and to help reduce swelling. (Don't use ice if you have skin numbness problems as you may not feel the cold).
- Painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can help to ease the pain. Ibuprofen should be used with caution if you have a history of asthma or indigestion. Please check with your pharmacist if you have any concerns.

### When should I see the doctor after an insect bite?

- If the swelling is severe.
- Infection is not common but may be suggested by increased pain and swelling at the site of the sting/bite.
- If you feel you have been bitten by a tick as this may cause Lyme disease.
- In malarial areas abroad and have been bitten by a mosquito.
- Symptoms of a generalised allergic reaction develop:
  1. Itchy skin in many parts of the body with or without an itchy blotchy rash.
  2. Swelling of your face which may extend to the lips, tongue, throat, and upper airway.
  3. Wheezing or difficulty in breathing.

**\*\* In the event of numbers 2 & 3 above occurring, consider calling for 999 immediately \*\***