

## Tips to Squash Stings and Bites

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In the summer months we like to flock to beaches and parks to enjoy the beautiful weather which gave Florida the moniker “The Sunshine State.” But for some of us, spending time outdoors means we are painting something of a target on for mosquitoes and other stinging critters.

Aside from bug bites being annoying and irritating, now we have to be mindful of possibly contracting the West Nile Virus, encephalitis and other diseases.

The Florida Department of Health advocated prevention by practicing the “5 D’s.” They are:

- Don’t go outdoors at DUSK and DAWN when mosquitoes are most active.
- DRESS so your skin is covered with clothing.
- Apply mosquito repellent containing DEET to bare skin and clothing. Other effective repellents include picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, and IR3535.
- Empty containers and DRAIN standing water around your home where mosquitoes can lay eggs.

When choosing a repellent so you won’t have to worry about bites and stings the next time you wander outdoors, remember the following:

- Always read the directions carefully for the approved usage before applying. Some repellents are not suitable for children.
- Recommended products contain concentrations of up to 30 percent DEET. Traditional repellents and EPA-approved alternatives are generally available at local pharmacies.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin or onto clothing, but not under clothing.

- When protecting children from bites and stings, read label instructions to ensure the repellent is appropriate for their age. According to the Center for Disease Control, mosquito repellents containing oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under the age of 3. DEET is not recommended for children younger than 2 months old.
- The best protection for infants is to be kept indoors or use mosquito netting over carriers to protect them.

If you happen to get bitten, most bites from creatures like bees, wasps and ants are not usually life-threatening unless you have an allergic reaction. These bites are common. Normal reactions to bites from these critters include pain, itching, redness and swelling confined to the sting site.

Caution must be taken with people who have abnormal or allergic reaction to bites and stings from these insects, which can turn dangerous or even deadly. While these reactions are uncommon, you should always monitor for any development of the following signs and symptoms, and call 911 immediately if you notice:

- Hives or swelling in areas other than the sting site.
- Tightness in the chest or difficulty breathing.
- Swelling of the mouth, tongue or throat.
- Dizziness or sharp drop in blood pressure.
- Unconsciousness or cardiac arrest.

If you had an allergic reaction in the past, you have a much greater chance of having a similar or worse reaction with each future bite. All allergic reactions, even mild ones, should be checked out by a doctor. In some cases, a doctor will prescribe an auto-injector pen to be carried by individuals who are prone to severe allergic reactions.

We all know bites and stings can be pesky and annoying, but protection and prevention will make your trips to the parks or beaches even more pleasant.