

Emergency Department  
**Insect Bites**

### **General Information**

An insect bite or sting can show up as a red lump in the skin that sometimes has a tiny hole in its centre. It can be caused by bites or stings from mosquitoes, fleas, ants, bees, wasps, spiders, bedbugs or other insects. Symptoms include pain, itching, redness and swelling; these symptoms usually disappear in 2 to 3 days. Scratching may make the symptoms last longer or may cause the area to become infected. Some people are allergic to certain insect bites or stings and may develop severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, hives (itchy red blotches on the skin), dizziness, fainting, or itching all over.

### **Instructions**

1. Use a cold compress for up to 6 hours after the bite or sting occurs to reduce swelling and itching.
2. After 6 hours, a warm compress may be soothing and may help to decrease swelling.

### **NOTE:**

If you are given medications called antihistamines (i.e. Benadryl), do not drive or do things that require full alertness. Anti-histamines may cause drowsiness.

### **Return to Emergency if any of the following develop**

- You have symptoms of an allergic reaction, such as wheezing or difficulty breathing, chest pain, sensation of swelling throat or tongue, fainting, an outbreak of raised, red, itchy patches on the skin, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramping or diarrhea.

### **Contact your Family Doctor if any of the following develop**

- Your symptoms do not improve in 2–3 days or the above instructions do not help.
- The area becomes red, warm, tender and swollen beyond the area of the bite or sting. These are signs of infection.
- You have a temperature over 38°C (100.4°F).

For more information or questions contact HealthLinkBC at 811.

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