



There always seems to be an unwanted guest (or many guests) at picnics, camping trips and hikes and even in our homes during the summer. Shooing them away only seems to work for so long. It is when they start biting or stinging you and your guests that you have had enough.

We are talking about insects. Bees, hornets and wasps are not the only summer pests in Washington. We also have mosquitoes, fleas and ticks.

A person's response to a bite or sting will depend on his or her sensitivity to the insect's venom. While most people have only mild reactions, those who are allergic to certain insect venom can have more severe symptoms that require emergency treatment.

You cannot stop all insects from biting or stinging, but you can reduce the number of bites and stings you get by following these tips:

- Avoid using scented soaps, perfumes or hair sprays.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and pants. Wear shoes and socks.
- Avoid wearing bright colors or flowery print clothing.
- Use insect repellents.

Note about insect repellents

Most insect repellents contain DEET (strengths range from 5%-100%). Choose a product with less than 30% DEET for children and avoid applying it around their eyes and hands. Some repellents are to be used ONLY on clothing, tents, screens and sleeping bags – not directly on the skin. Insect repellents are considered safe when the directions are read and followed carefully.

Bites and stings happen

If there is a stinger, try to remove it right away by scraping it with a dull, firm surface, such as a credit card, in the opposite direction the stinger is pointing. Wash the sting/bite site with soap and water. Remove jewelry near the bite/sting site, as swelling may occur. Apply a cloth-covered ice pack (no more than 15 min. every 30 min.) or a cloth soaked in cold water with the body part above the heart to reduce pain and swelling. If the victim has trouble breathing, call 911 right away. Call the Poison Center, **1-800-222-1222**, for any other first aid questions.

Snake and animal bites also tend to happen during the summer. The Poison Center hotline, **1-800-222-1222**, can help you with the first aid steps for these bites as well.