

How to Avoid Stinging Insects

Stinging insects do not seek sustenance from humans, as do biting insects such as mosquitoes and flies. The sting of these insects is only used against people for self-defense or defense of the nest.

Honeybees

These bees travel in a straight line from flower to hive, and stings usually occur when someone interrupts a bee in flight, or strikes a flower in which a bee is working. Honeybees are attracted by flower fragrances, bright colors and smooth water surfaces. Fragrant perfumes, colognes and powders also act as attractants. The fragrance of some house paint has been known to act as a stimulant to honeybees and cause them to behave aggressively. For safety, clothing should be light in color. Hair should be short or tied up during the summer months to avoid entanglements that cause stings. If a person is stung and cannot identify the insect, see if the sting is embedded in the sting site. If it is, changes are that the sting was from a honeybee.

Wasp, Yellow Jackets and Hornets

Wasps feed on the larvae of other insects, which they kill with repeated stings. The stinger is not embedded in the sting site.

The adult wasp lives on juices, sap and nectar; it is attracted by odors such as spoiling food, soft drinks, fruit juices, leather, perspiration, bright colors and a water supply.

Yellow jackets make their nests in the ground, and the paper hornets' nests may be close to the ground or high above it. Both of these stinging insects are particularly hazardous to bare feet and ankles.

General Rules for Avoidance

1. Stay still whenever a stinging insect approaches you. Always move slowly.
2. Never slap or brush off an insect of this kind. It will not sting unless frightened or antagonized.
3. Be careful when you pick up clothing that has been left on the ground. Wasps or other stinging insects could be in or on the folds of the clothing.
4. Avoid orchards in bloom, clover fields and any areas that are abundant with flowers.
5. Don't wear perfume, hair sprays, hair tonics, sun-tan lotions and certain cosmetics that could attract insects.
6. Do not mow lawns, trim hedges, prune trees, or do gardening during the dangerous seasons.
7. Collisions cause stings, so avoid running, riding horses, bicycles or motorcycles. A convertible automobile with the top down is especially hazardous.

Francisco J. Cano, M.D.

Diplomat of the American Board of Allergy, and Immunology
Pediatric and Adult Asthma, Allergy and Immunology

8. Keep an insecticide spray in the glove compartment of your car.
9. Caution children about not throwing stones or sticks at insect nests.
10. Inspect property in the early spring and make periodic inspections all summer until hard frost. (Allergic individuals should not participate in these inspections.)
11. Avoid cooking, eating or feeding of pets outdoors.

12. Avoid areas where there are rotting foods on the ground, such as orchards.
13. Avoid open footwear or loose fitting clothes. Bright colors, flowery prints and black, seem to attract insects more so than do light colors such as white, green, tan and khaki.
14. Hypersensitive persons should never be alone when hiking, boating, swimming, golfing, or otherwise involved outdoors since they often need help in starting prompt emergency treatment measures.

General Rules for Removal

Wasps build open-comb nests or mud structures under eaves, in carports, behind shutters, in shrubs, in woodpiles and, in fact, almost any protected place.

Yellow-jacket's nests are usually located in underground abandoned burrows of small rodents, between the cracks of rock walls or between the walls of frame buildings; they emerge through a small hole which should be marked by daylight with a thin stick.

Hornets build gray football-shaped hives, usually in shrubs or trees, often high or far out on a branch.

Honey bees are frequently found in commercial hives but may swarm onto twigs or branches, and are known to be found in hollow trees, limbs or between the outside walls of buildings.

1. Use the skills of an exterminator or the local fire department to remove hornet nests. Bee keepers will often be glad to come to your property and relocate a bee colony.
2. Locate yellow jacket nests during the day and demolish them at night when the insects have returned home.
3. At least two applications of gasoline, kerosene or lye are needed in the hole where yellow jackets have nested. The fumes do the job, so do not light the gas or kerosene. Wear protective clothing and call an exterminator if you are uncertain about how to proceed.
4. Wasp nest can be knocked down with a broom handle after spraying the nest with an insecticide.