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Venom Allergy

A severe reaction to an insect bite is called “anaphylaxis”. It is the most severe form of an allergic reaction.

Some of the common symptoms include:

- Dizziness
- Weakness or unconsciousness
- Throat tightness or difficulty breathing
- Wheezing
- Nausea
- Itching
- Hives and/or generalized swelling

If you have a severe reaction to an insect sting, there is a 60% chance you will have another severe reaction if re-stung. A serious anaphylactic reaction can be prevented from occurring by treating with venom allergy injections.

Venom allergy injections involves administering gradually increasing doses of venom that stimulates the immune system to become resistant to allergic reactions.

The likelihood of stings can be lessened by taking certain simple precautions. See our handout out for avoidance.

Before the immunotherapy takes effect, you should carry a form of epinephrine for self-administration. You should be instructed on how to inject the medication into an appropriate site, such as your thigh, in emergencies. It is often effective in slowing or stopping the reaction, but is not always enough. It is not a replacement for medical care or an alternative for venom immunotherapy, but it will give you time to seek medical attention when stung. It is recommended that you carry your epinephrine with you at all times, particularly during the insect season.

It is also recommended that you carry a card or have an identification bracelet or necklace, such as “Medic Alert”, identifying you as a person hypersensitive to Hymenoptera Insect Sting.