INSECT BITES & STINGS

In addition to common insect bites, such as fleas, spiders, and bees, there are a number of small parasites that live on or in human skin and produce characteristic marks there. Many small insects, including gnats, fleas, mosquitoes, bedbugs, spiders, fire ants, and lice produce small, inflamed, itchy spots where they bite the skin. Sensitivity to such bites varies; some individuals get large, puffy, red wheals that persist for days, while others hardly notice a bite form the same insect. Often several bites appear together.

Some people are allergic to stings from certain insects. A severe allergic reaction is called anaphylactic shock. Symptoms may include severe itching; stomach cramps; nausea and vomiting; anxiety; difficulty in breathing; bluish tinge to skin; dizziness; collapse; unconsciousness and/or hives on the body. Many people know that they have such an allergy, and have an emergency kit available. If not, remove the stinger by scraping it out with a knife, credit card, or fingernail (do not use tweezers, as you may squeeze more venom out) and apply a light-constricting band two to four inches above the sting. Make the victim as comfortable as possible, and get medical help at once.

Symptoms of a minor insect bite or sting may include pain, swelling at the site, redness, itching, and/or burning. Multiple stings may cause a toxic reaction with headache, muscle cramps, fever, drowsiness, or even unconsciousness. A severe toxic reaction may require medical treatment. Remove any stinger without using tweezers. Wash the area with soap and water. Apply an ice pack or cold compresses to the area.

**Bees, Wasps, and Hornets:** Only the Honey Bee leaves a stinger in the skin. Remove it without using tweezers, to avoid squeezing more venom into the area.

**Spiders:** Bites from poisonous spiders are especially dangerous for young children and the elderly or ill. Two poisonous spiders are found in the United States – Black Widows and the Brown Recluse, or Fiddler Spider. If you have extreme pain or other symptoms after being bitten by a spider put ice or cold compresses on the bite and go for medical help at once. Take the spider with you if possible.

**Scorpions:** Some scorpions are more poisonous than others. Treat as for a spider bite and get medical help.