

The Allergy & Asthma Clinic

www.TheAllergyClinic.com

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Summer is Here!!!

Summertime means outdoor BBQ's and picnics and enjoying the outdoors. We are lucky to be in the Bay Area, where outdoor temperatures are fairly mild, but there is a constant no matter where you are- insects and bugs. The majority of insects do not bite or sting, but they can be a nuisance. There are several ways you can minimize insects in your yard, including:

- * Sweeping up any crumbs and wiping away spilled liquids when dining on your patio. Even the smallest food morsel or a sticky substance can attract ants and other insects.
- * Plant a few herbs. Garlic and rosemary can repel biting insects. Chives and lemongrass also ward off other pests.
- * Citronella drives away flies and mosquitoes. Spraying lavender or eucalyptus (assuming you are not allergic to these substances) can also create a natural pest barrier. Planting marigolds has been said to also keep bugs away.
- * Mouthwash-yes you read it correctly. Spraying your tables and chairs with mouthwash can also deter insects.
- * If you have pets, make sure that they are up to date with their flea and tick treatment. Make sure that you also "wipe down" your pets after they have been outdoors, so as to prevent insects and allergens from being brought into the home.

If you still get insect bites, most insect bites are mild and can be treated at home. Make sure to always wash the area with soap and water and if localized swelling develops, apply ice or a cold compress. If the bite occurred on an extremity, elevate it.

You can use an OTC hydrocortisone cream as needed, but try not to use this product for more than a week on the same area of the skin. Antihistamines (preferably those that are non-sedating) can also be taken as needed for itching and swelling.

In some cases, an insect bite/sting can be associated with more serious reactions called anaphylaxis. According to various sources, the percentage of people who are allergic to insect stings varies, but it's estimated to be between 1% and 7.5%. Large local reactions are more common than systemic reactions and are estimated to occur in up to 10% of adults. If you can visibly see a stinger, try to remove it ("flicking" works best in most cases), but if the person is experiencing the symptoms noted below, emergency medical services should be summoned ASAP.

Signs and Symptoms of a Systemic Reaction to an Insect Bite/Sting:

- Trouble breathing.
- Swelling of the lips, face, eyelids or throat.
- Dizziness, fainting or unconsciousness.
- A weak and rapid pulse.
- Hives.

In the event that a systemic reaction occurred following an insect bite or sting, contact us so that we can further discuss treatment options, including preventative measures, for insect sting hypersensitivity.