

Allergy & Immunology, PLC's
Asthma and Allergy Center

Lynchburg

1715 Thomson Dr. Lynchburg, VA 24501
P. 434.846.2244 F. 434.846.0602

Roanoke

1505 Franklin Rd, SW, Roanoke, VA 24016
P. 540.343.7331 F. 540.343.7349

Salem

3529 Keagy Rd Salem, VA 24153
P. 540.343.7331 F. 540.725.1356

Dane McBride, M.D.

Luis Matos, M.D.

Saju Eapen, M.D.

Thomas Fame, M.D.

Larissa Norman, FNP

Pamela Price, FNP

Insect Sting Allergies

- Experts estimate that 2 million Americans are allergic to insect stings, and many of these individuals are at risk of suffering life-threatening reactions to insect venom.
- Insect stings send more than 500,000 Americans to hospital emergency rooms every year, and cause at least 50 known deaths each year.
- Symptoms of insect sting allergic reaction, called “anaphylaxis,” may include hives, itchiness, swelling in areas other than the sting site, difficulty breathing, a sharp drop in blood pressure, hoarse voice or swelling of the tongue, dizziness, unconsciousness and cardiac arrest. Reactions such as these require immediate medical attention.
- People with insect sting allergies should see an allergist for a three-step treatment approach.
- Avoidance tactics are the first line of defense to insect stings. People with allergies to insect stings should:
 - Avoid walking barefoot in the grass, where stinging insects forage.
 - Avoid drinking from open soft drink cans, which stinging insects are attracted to and will crawl inside.
 - Keep food covered when eating outdoors.
 - Avoid sweet-smelling perfumes, hairsprays and deodorants.
 - Avoid wearing bright colored clothing with flowery patterns.
- For emergency treatment, an allergist can prescribe and give instructions on how to use a self-administered epinephrine (adrenaline) kit. A person who has had an allergic reaction to insect sting has a 60 percent chance of having another similar or worse reactions if stung again, and should always have an emergency kit.
- An allergist can also provide a preventive treatment called venom immunotherapy (or venom allergy shots). It works by introducing gradually increasing doses of purified insect venom, and has been shown to be 97 percent effective in preventing future allergic reactions to insect stings.
- Stinging insects such as bees, wasps, hornets and yellow jackets, are most active during late-summer and early-autumn when nest populations can exceed 60,000 insects. These insects occur throughout the United States. Another stinging insect, the fire ant, occurs year-round and infects more than 250 million acres in the southern states.