

How to Treat a Bee Sting

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This wikiHow will show you various ways in which to treat a bee sting.

10 Second Summary

1. Remove the stinger by scraping it off. Don't pinch it.
2. Seek emergency care if you notice signs of an allergic reaction.
3. Take ibuprofen or acetaminophen for pain relief.
4. Apply a paste made from baking soda and water to the sting.
5. Apply a wrapped ice pack for 20 minutes.

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Steps

1 If the bee that stung you was a honeybee, (if it is a wasp then you can't) remove the stinger as soon as possible. The best method of removal is to scrape it out. DO NOT pinch the stinger as you could be squeezing more venom out of the venom sac located at the end of the stinger. But, even slight delays in removal caused by concerns over performing it correctly (or getting out a knife blade or credit card) are likely to increase the dose of venom received.^[1]

2 Look for symptoms of an allergic reaction:^[2]

- Difficulty breathing
- Hives that appear as a red, itchy rash and spread to areas beyond the sting
- Swelling of the face, throat or mouth tissue
- Wheezing or difficulty swallowing
- Restlessness and anxiety
- Rapid pulse
- Dizziness or a sharp drop in blood pressure
- If the symptoms are present, seek immediate emergency medical attention. Take an antihistamine as soon as possible and be ready to use the epinephrine part of an emergency allergy kit, if it has been prescribed in the past.^[3] See [How to Use an EpiPen](#).

3 Take ibuprofen or acetaminophen for pain relief if no symptoms of allergic reactions are present.^[3]

4 Apply dampened baking soda to bee sting area, and relief is sure to come. You may run in under cold water for relief instead, if no baking soda is present.

5 Apply one of the following remedies (ordered from most effective to least effective).^[4]

Method
1

Home Remedy 1: Ice

Apply ice wrapped in fabric to the bee sting for 20 minutes.

1

2 The symptoms should disappear almost immediately, and stop bothering you for about 5 hours before you need to reapply. The coldness constricts blood vessels (which slows the flow of venom-tainted blood) and numbs the pain and itching. And ice is practically free!^[4]

Method
2**Home Remedy 2: Toothpaste**

1 Apply toothpaste on the bee sting. The tingling action will make you feel like you're scratching the itch, which is relieving.^[4]

2 Wait 100 minutes for the symptoms to be alleviated.

3 Reapply in 5 hours.

Method
3**Home Remedy 3: Vinegar, Baking Soda, and Meat Tenderizer**

1 Mix vinegar, baking soda, and meat tenderizer into a paste.

- Meat tenderizer contains an enzyme called papain that can break down toxins in bee venom.
- This mixture will make you smell like an antipasto sampler.

2 Apply it to the bee sting. It will fizz.

3 Wait 20 minutes for the symptoms to subside; they should disappear about an hour after application.^[4]

4 Reapply after several hours.

Method
4**Home Remedy 4: Calamine Lotion with Analgesic**

1 Apply a calamine lotion with analgesic (e.g. Caladryl). You'll start feeling a soothing tingle.

2 Wait 45 minutes for the symptoms to be relieved.

3 Reapply 4 hours later. The symptoms will return suddenly, unlike with other remedies.^[4]

Method
5**Home Remedy 5: Hydrocortisone Cream**

1 Apply maximum strength hydrocortisone cream on the sting site. It'll dry visibly white.

2 Expect the symptoms to be *slightly* relieved.^[4]

3 Reapply after four hours, when the symptom return full-force.

**Method
6****Home Remedy 6: Honey**

- 1** Apply honey to the sting.
- 2** Expect the cool and soothing sensation to alleviate the symptoms *slightly* for 30 minutes.^[4]

**Method
7****Home Remedy 7: Antihistamines**

- 1** Apply an antihistamine cream to the bee sting. Most creams are odorless and dry invisibly, which can be beneficial depending on your situation.
- 2** Expect the symptoms to be relieved *slightly* for about 30 minutes to an hour.^[4]

**Method
8****Home Remedy 8: Benzocaine Sticks**

- 1** Rub the stick against the bee sting. The Benzocaine deadens nerve endings, and the sticks are convenient to carry, although the relief is fleeting.
- 2** Expect *slight* relief for 15 minutes.^[4]

**Method
9****Home Remedy 9: Deodorant**

- 1** Apply a deodorant (such as Ban Roll-On) on the site.
- 2** Expect for the symptoms to be displaced, rather than relieved. The area immediately surrounding the sting will be soothed, but the area surrounding that might get worse.^[4]

**Method
10****Home Remedy 10: Raw Onion**

- 1** Hold a slice of raw onion on your sting at your own risk.
- 2** Prepare for the possibility that the symptoms will get worse, and you'll smell. Prepare also for the possibility, that the onion's juice will pull out some of the venom and the sting won't get as bad, especially if done right after the event. ^[4] You might need these articles:
 - [How to Chop Onions Without Tears](#)
 - [How to Remove Onion Smell From Hands](#)

**Method
11****Home Remedy 11: Raw Potato**

- 1** Peel open a raw potato or cut it in half.
- 2** Put the potato on the bee sting.
- 3** This will provide a temporary soothing and can cause the sting to heal more quickly.

Community Q&A

What should I do if the sting is really itchy?

 Something that usually soothes is making a paste of baking soda and water and applying it to the sting.
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What do I do if the sting makes the surrounding muscles get sore?

 This is normal. The soreness should improve in a day or two. If it does not, see a doctor.
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What does bee stings look like?

 A normal bee sting is a small red rash or bump.
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What if I can't find the sting?

 The sting has probably fallen out, or may be beneath your skin layer. Try and look carefully, just in case the sting is beneath your skin. If the sting is not visible beneath the skin, it has probably fallen out already.
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What if I got stung on the lip?

 If you were being sad and were quivering your lip and it bit the part of the lip that goes back inside your mouth, then I would swish nice cool water around in your mouth. Make sure you spit it out instead of swallowing it. Once you have done that, suck on some ice. See the doctor immediately if you're allergic as you may swell and not be able to breathe.
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What should I do if I see a bee?

 Simply ignore or avoid it. Don't swat at it or threaten it. A bee will only sting as a last resort, since it will die after stinging you.
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What usually happens after a bee stings you?

 When a honey bee stings a person, it leaves behind its stinger, as well as part of its abdomen and digestive tract. This massive abdominal rupture kills the honey bee. Honey bees are the only species of bees to die after stinging.
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How can I stop the swelling?

 Remove the sting from the bee, then use soap and water to clean and wipe the part of skin that has been stung. Then try to use ointments suitable for bee sting and apply it as directed. Then you can try to wrap it with cloths to keep out any bacteria.
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How do I rub it off? Won't it go farther into my skin?

 Use a credit card or a knife to carefully scrape the stinger sideways. If you don't push down, it won't go farther into your skin.
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What should I do with a week-old bee sting that is still itchy and swollen?

 Since it is a week old, you may want to see a doctor. You need to get the venom out. Try to poke a hole with a knife and drain it.
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Tips

- Dry tobacco and spit worked up into a gooey glob make a proper poultice for treating stings. (Kentucky-fried wisdom)
- Recent studies on bee stings has shown that the speed of removal, by any method, is more important in limiting the amount of poison received after a sting.^[5]

- Mix baking soda with water; apply paste and let dry. This pulls out venom if applied immediately and works quickly to relieve pain and reduce swelling.
- If it is a wasp or bee sting, you can mix mud and water together and apply it to the sting.
- Do not itch it even if it does get itchy. It will just make it worse.

Warnings

- You may become allergic to stings even if you have not had reactions to stings in the past. Previous stings without incident does not mean you will never have an anaphylactic reaction. Typically once you have a reaction you will continue to be allergic. Your reaction may also depend on the type of bee that stings you. Some are allergic to wasps but not honey bees.
- Consult your physician if you are noticing more severe symptoms to stings. Your physician may want to prescribe an Epinephrine pen for you to carry with you in the event you are stung again. The Epi-Pens are preloaded shots with medication to treat anaphylaxis.

Sources and Citations

1. <http://bees.ucr.edu/stings.html>
2. <http://www.webmd.com/allergies/guide/insect-stings>
3. [↑] ^{3.03.1} <http://firstaid.webmd.com/bee-and-wasp-stings-treatment>

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