

How to Treat a Fire Ant Sting

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When a fire ant stings, it injects venom that causes itching, swelling, and redness of the skin. Discomfort occurs as a small red welt appears, followed soon by a clear blister. The fluid in the blister may turn cloudy, and the area begins to itch, swell and become painful. Learn how to deal immediately with a fire ant sting, determine whether you are having an allergic reaction, and treat the sting to ease the swelling and pain.

If you are experiencing shortness of breath or tightness in your throat following a fire ant sting, seek immediate medical care.

Part
1

Dealing with Fire Ants

1 Move away from the fire ant mound. Most stings occur when people accidentally step into or sit on a fire ant mound, disturbing hundreds of thousands of fire ants primed to defend their home. If you start feeling stings, the first thing to do is get up and leave the area as quickly as possible.

2 Remove the ants. Fire ants clamp onto the body with their mandibles, and are difficult to remove. Quickly pick them off one at a time and drop them on the ground.

- You can try brushing the ants away, but if they have already clamped down with their mandibles, they may continue hanging on tight.
- Refrain from slapping at the ants, as this only agitates them.
- If there's a chance more ants have gotten into your clothes, remove them immediately.

Part
2

Assessing Whether You're Allergic to the Bites

1 Consider your symptoms. It's rare to be allergic to fire ant stings, but if you are, you'll need to get medical treatment immediately. Swelling and pain are normal, but *if you have these symptoms, get to an emergency care center or hospital immediately:*

- Hives, itching and swelling in areas other than the place where you were bitten.
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Tightness in the chest and difficulty breathing.
- Swelling of the throat, tongue and lips, or difficulty swallowing.
- Anaphylactic shock, which occurs in the most severe cases, can lead to dizziness, blackout, and cardiac arrest if not treated right away.

2 Seek treatment. Your allergic reaction will be treated with epinephrine, antihistamines or steroids at the hospital to stabilize your symptoms.

- If you know yourself to be allergic to fire ant stings, you might already be carrying an epinephrine shot, commonly called an epi-pen (epinephrine). Inject yourself or have a friend help you, then proceed to the hospital.

Part
3

Treating Fire Ant Bites

1 Elevate the affected area. While you're on your way home to get further treatment, hold your arm in an elevated position to help minimize the swelling.

- 2 Bathe the sting with soapy water.** Gently wash the area to remove dirt and any other debris from the area. This will help prevent an infection.
- 3 Place a cool compress on the infected area.** This will help to alleviate the itching by bringing down the swelling and numbing the stung area.
- 4 Take an antihistamine or use a hydrocortisone cream.** These over-the-counter medicines will help alleviate the pain and itching.
- 5 Don't pop the blister.** After a few hours, the swelling will subside a little and a blister will form. As long as you don't pop the blister, the area shouldn't become infected. Avoid scratching it, as this can cause it to break.
 - If the blister breaks, cleanse the area with soapy water and monitor it for signs of infection.
 - If the area becomes discolored or starts leaking pus, it may have become infected. Seek medical attention immediately.

**Part
4****Home Remedies (Unverified)**

The following remedies have been tried with success by various readers. They may or may not work the same for you, so make up your own mind as to their efficacy. Always defer to seeing a doctor if in any doubt.

- 1 Use rubbing alcohol and meat tenderizer.**
 - After brushing off the ants, immediately rinse the area with rubbing alcohol and leave it wet.
 - Elevate the area and sprinkle a generous amount of meat tenderizer on the area.^[1] This will prevent the effects of the sting from progressing beyond the moment of treatment.
- 2 Use hand sanitizer.** Golfers sometimes use this method in Florida.
 - Keep a bottle of liquid hand sanitizer handy in your bag.
 - Apply the hand sanitizer to the bite area liberally after freeing your skin of ants.
 - Let it stay in place. This will help alleviate the burn for the time being and the usual symptoms may not kick in for hours, allowing you to continue with your activity.
 - Take Benadryl or equivalent antihistamine when you get back home.
- 3 Try rubbing the bite area very carefully with a paste made from water and baking soda.**^[1] This may help lessen the itching and can help to reduce redness.
 - A paste made from baking soda and vinegar may also work. As can vinegar on its own.^[1]
- 4 Use an ice pack or a cloth soaked in cold water.**^[1] Apply this direct to the bite area for intervals of 10 minutes, taking a break between each treatment.
 - Be aware that ice can burn skin if kept on it for too long.
- 5 Use ammonia.**^[citation needed] As soon as you are stung, use ammonia to rinse the area as quickly as possible. A common product that contains ammonia is Windex or any other window cleaner product. This will minimize the effects of the stings.

Community Q&A**How many times can a fire ant sting?**

As many as the ant wants to. Unlike bees, they aren't hurt by using their stinger. Realistically, an ant has enough

Contributor
venom for at least a dozen stings, but each one would be weaker than the last. Even out of venom, they can keep stinging, for effect.
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What happens if you don't treat the sting?

Contributor
You may experience much discomfort, but eventually it will heal.
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What if I have already popped the blister?

Contributor
Keep it clean and watch for an infection. It is now an open sore, so you must treat it as one.
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I was stung on my foot, but I cannot locate the wound site. How do I treat this?

Contributor
Soak your foot in warm water, this will bring up the initial bite site on your foot.
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Can fire ant bites spread to areas that didn't come in contact with the ants?

Contributor
No, unlike poison ivy, which is an allergic reaction, fire ant bites are caused from the insect biting and injecting its venom. You can only get one blister per bite.
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What do I do to help a blister diminish? I will apply the antihistamine immediately. Any other suggestions?

Contributor
Fire ant bites can take a while to heal. Keep treating with antihistamine and watch for infection.
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What can be done for a sting aside from peroxide, hydrocortisone, and aloe vera?

Contributor
You can ice it but there isn't much else to be done. If your symptoms are very severe, you may ask your physician if you need antibiotics.
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I stepped in an ant bed while fishing. My doctor says I am OK but I feel nauseous and dizzy. What should I do?

Contributor
Go to the doctor and tell him/her you are having these symptoms; he/she might give you an antibiotic if it's not severe.
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Is there a homemade remedy for an allergic reaction to fire ant stings?

Contributor
Do not attempt to treat an allergic reaction with a homemade remedy. Seek medical attention immediately if you believe you are experiencing an allergic reaction, as they can progress quickly.
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What do I do if I can't get rid of the fever caused by fire ant bites?

Contributor
Seek medical attention! Put ice on your forehead to help break the fever and immediately call your physician.
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Tips

- Look before you sit, stand or put your bags/tee/tent, etc. down. Vigilance can prevent the stings from occurring in the first place.
- Use anti-inflammatory cream. This reduces the stinging, and/or burning.
- Putting toothpaste on ant bites and letting it dry helps a lot.
- Aloe vera may soothe some of the pain from the sting. However, be sure to use fresh aloe vera, from a fresh aloe vera spine. Split the leaf so that it opens like a book. You will be slicing it lengthwise at the edge of the leaf. A paring knife works best for this purpose. If you prefer remove the spines on the edges first. Apply the oozing gel liberally over the sting area.
- Keeping a vigilant watch for fire ant mounds and keeping loved ones and pets away from them is a sure way to prevent future stings.
- Do not scratch, it may cause infection.

- By using olive oil, this soothes and smoothes the infected area. Get a paper towel, fold it in half and put a reasonable amount of olive oil on the towel, then start to dab it on the infected area and transition to holding the olive oil towel on your infected area. Hold the towel there for 5-7 minutes, then leave the olive oil on the infected area for an hour and a half, then rinse thoroughly with hot water. This treatment should take some of the sting away as well as smoothing the skin of bumps.
- If you have any succulents in your home or around it you can cut them in half and then carefully rub the liquids on the bite to reduce itching and infection.

Warnings

- Allergic reactions can be minor to severe. Any abnormal reactions should be reported to a doctor right away.
- The best way to prevent injuries caused by fire ants from happening is to treat the fire ant infested areas with preventative ingredients, such as fipronil.

Sources and Citations

- ↑ ^{1.01.11.21.3}<http://www.thesurvivaldoctor.com/2013/04/02/how-to-treat-fire-ant-bites/>
- <http://www.acaai.org/allergist/allergies/Types/insect-sting-allergies/Pages/fire-ant-stings-allergy.aspx> – research source