Allergy to Stinging Insects

Children who are allergic to the venom (poison) in bee stings and other insects should be **very careful** not to get stung. The most common stinging insects found in the Ohio area are: honeybees, wasps, yellow jackets, and hornets.

Where Insect Nests Are Usually Found

Teach your child to avoid stinging insects and their nests (Picture 1).

- Yellow jackets – in the ground and under logs
- Wasps – in mud nests under house eaves or window sills
- Honeybees – in trees and around plants
- Hornets – in papery nests in trees

Care of the Home and Area around It

- Remove vines that may hide nests from the outside of the house.
- Make sure windows and doors have screens.
- Do not stack firewood near the house.
- Keep garbage cans covered and very clean.
- Have an **exterminator** destroy any nests around the home.
- Cover any open ends of swing set posts, clothes lines or other posts.
Things that Attract Bees
When playing outside, your child should avoid things that attract bees. These include:

- Perfume
- Hair tonic
- Cosmetics
- Flowery prints on clothes
- Flowering shrubs or plants
- Picnic areas, outdoor meals
- Sweet drinks and food such as soda pop
- Hair spray
- Suntan lotion (with strong odor)
- Bright-colored clothing
- Black fabrics
- Orchards with trees in bloom or ripe fruit
- Pet foods

Types of Allergic Reactions
Reactions to stinging insects may be local or systemic.

- **Local reactions** to bee stings are not usually life-threatening, but may include mild discomfort, redness and swelling.

- **Systemic reactions** are the most severe type of reactions and may be life-threatening. A systemic reaction usually begins with symptoms of a local reaction. Then, within 15 minutes after being stung, symptoms get worse. They include hives, trouble breathing, shock, and in extreme cases, even death.

Symptoms of a Local Reaction
If your child has a local reaction to a stinging insect, he or she may have these symptoms:

- Swelling and redness at the sting site
- Pain
- Itching at the sting site

Treating a Local Reaction

- If your child is stung by a bee, you will see the stinger (tiny black object) in his skin. To remove the stinger, run a credit card across it, from the opposite direction that it went in. Do not pinch the stinger with tweezers because this will squeeze more venom into the skin.
- Raise the sting site above the level of your child's heart to reduce swelling.
- Place cold compresses (cold wet washcloths or towels) on the sting site.
- Take any oral antihistamine medicine as prescribed by your doctor.
- Put calamine lotion (or a paste made of meat tenderizer and water) on the sting site to decrease itching.
Symptoms of a Systemic Reaction

- Hives
- Hoarseness
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Trouble swallowing
- Swelling of lips or tongue
- Heavy sweating
- Itchy throat
- Cough
- Vomiting
- Itchy eyes
- Diarrhea

Treating a Systemic Reaction

Doctors often prescribe an automatic injector device such as an EpiPen® that contains a pre-measured dose of adrenaline for children who have a history of prior systemic reactions. **If you do not have this type of medicine and your child is having symptoms of systemic reaction, call 9-1-1 and get emergency treatment immediately.**

Using an Automatic Injector (Epipen®)

It is important to understand these instructions so you will know how to use the automatic injector if needed. (Refer to the Helping Hand, *Epinephrine Autoinjector Pens, HH-V-122*).

1. Pull off the blue safety cap from the pen.
2. Make a fist around the syringe so the orange tip is pointing down. **CAUTION: DO NOT PUT YOUR THUMB ON THE ORANGE TIP.** If the pen is upside down, you will inject yourself in the finger!
3. Hold orange tip near outer thigh, swing and press firmly against the outer thigh until you hear it click. **Hold it in the thigh for 10 seconds** (Picture 2). It can be given through clothing if necessary.
4. Remove EpiPen from the thigh and massage the injection site for 10 seconds. The orange needle cover will now cover the used needle.
5. Call 911.

Care and Storage of the Injector

- Take your empty injector to your physician or local hospital to dispose of in a safe manner.
- Keep the automatic injector out of the reach of small children.
- If the solution in the syringe is discolored (not clear), throw it away and get a new one.
- At home, store it in a dark place at room temperature.
- Check the expiration date on the syringe. Replace it if the date has expired.
- Do not play with the automatic injector or place your finger over the tip.
- In case of accidental injection, go to the nearest emergency room or medical facility.
Safety Tips

- If your child has had a systemic reaction to a stinging insect, he or she should wear a medical ID bracelet or necklace (available at most pharmacies) (Picture 3).
- Always have the injector available at school, daycare or baby-sitter, on outdoor trips or when away from home.
- Always have an extra automatic injector available.
- Your child should never go near a known insect hive or nest.
- Your child should always wear shoes or sneakers (not sandals) when outdoors, except when on a hard, sandy beach.
- For school and child care, make sure you complete the required forms to use the injector if needed. Make sure all school personnel know how to use it.

Allergy Testing

- Contact your child’s doctor to discuss allergy testing. Any child who has had a systemic reaction to a stinging insect should be tested for allergy to the insect's venom. Allergy shots can often prevent a systemic reaction. Your allergy specialist will decide if these shots are needed for your child.
- If you need a doctor for your child, call the Children’s Hospital referral and Information Line at (614) 722-KIDS.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse, or call ________________.