

70. HOW TO DEAL WITH INSECT STINGS

Stings or bites from various creatures can range from annoying to fatally dangerous. A sting, say, from a bee or hornet, can cause *anaphylaxis* or anaphylactic shock (a gradual-to-rapid collapse of certain circulatory functions leading to suffocation or "drowning" in one's own blood serums) in some particularly sensitive individuals.

Typically, these are people who suffer from a great many allergies. Fortunately, such individuals normally know they are at risk and tend to avoid situations (such as trekking or camping) where these risks are great.

But if you're an active, outdoors person, knowing how to treat stings and bites can make the difference between a happy, enjoyable outing and one that you'll otherwise regret undertaking. Let's define our meanings: Animals usually bite, while insects generally sting ... and, in the process, often inject poison into their victim.

The first thing to remember if you're stung by a bee or hornet, is that you are being injected with poison. Stinging insects usually carry very powerful poisons, but you're only getting a small dose.

A bee will normally leave its stinger -- a bulb-and-needle affair (like a miniature hypodermic syringe) -- in its victim. You need to get the stinger out without "pumping" the bulb (which injects more poison into the skin). Instead of pinching or plucking the stinger out, **drag a finger- or thumbnail across it, to draw it out backwards**. Hornets normally do not leave their stingers in the victim.

I'll talk about treatment in a moment. But by far, the most common stinging insect is the mosquito. We normally think of these creatures as simply annoyances; but one balmy evening in southern India, in 1983, I remember clearly being stung by several 'skeeters, then waking up the next day with a raging case of malaria! It was the most ill I have ever been -- I was delirious from fever for more than a week! It nearly killed me.

The best treatment for mosquito bites is *prevention*. In Africa, most of the beds where I've slept had mosquito netting as a matter of course. I felt particularly happy to have that netting on several occasions, as I watched hand-sized spiders patrol back-country hotel ceilings in search of prey.

In India, however, and other parts of the Third World, you'll need to **carry your own netting**. Nothing elaborate; just a big enough sheet of mosquito netting (which is always available in local bazaars) in which to wrap yourself loosely at night. Mosquitoes are less a bother during the day -- especially if you **avoid white, or very light-colored clothing**. Dawn, dusk and still nights are when you most need the netting.

Particularly with mosquitoes, it's said that they are attracted far more quickly to one who eats dairy products than to one who does not. It may have to do with the generally rancid smell given off by dairy-eaters. To test for your own level of "butter-rancidity," rub your fingertip in the area behind your ear or on the side of your nose until it becomes a bit oily.

If your oily fingertip now smells like rancid butter, you may be a prime target for hungry mosquitoes. If you're going to be in hot, tropical climates -- or any other areas where mosquitoes

abound -- **avoiding dairy products for several weeks beforehand** may pay welcome rewards.

Self-treating any kind of insect sting is pretty much the same process, regardless of the insect's type. Assuming no stinger is remaining, what you really need to do is relieve the itching, burning and redness -- all symptoms of your body's allergic reaction to being poisoned -- and there are many ways to do this.

Probably the easiest tactic is to **rub some of your own saliva onto the site, and let it dry** naturally, perhaps by blowing upon it. Or you can **pack the affected area with mud** that has been made by moistening dirt with either your saliva or water from your canteen. Pack it on and let it dry, as well. Mud can also be an effective insect repellant, if you're in a survival situation and don't mind the dirtiness associated with covering your exposed skin area with the stuff.

Moistening some **tobacco, salt** or **baking soda** the same way, and packing that onto the stung area, also should reduce or eliminate the discomfort. This should work well with any insect-stung site, not just from mosquitoes.

Any **papaya-based (papain) meat tenderizer** can be dabbed onto the affected area, as well. This is available in nearly every supermarket in America. If you're traveling, take some with you in your first-aid kit. It can be invaluable for treating any sting!

Olive oil can promptly relieve the discomfort of a variety of stings, especially those of jellyfish, man-o-war and certain types of caterpillars. If you have some of that oil, try it for any type of sting, though. Or if you have access to **cream**, mix some with a little **salt** to make a paste. Then dab it onto the stung site.

Two other tactics can also work well: Rub some **onion** (cut, to reveal its moist interior) upon the affected area; failing an onion, use another member of the allium family -- **a cut clove of garlic** - to rub upon the area. Or simply place a cud of **well-chewed grass** on the area, almost like a poultice. Even better, chew some **parsley** and apply it the same way as the grass. Repeat any of these processes, as needed. Or try **crushed charcoal** mixed with a liquid, then patted onto the site.

Dabbing **honey, papaya sap** or **toothpaste** onto the affected area also works well. This is additionally true of **lemon juice, household ammonia, diluted household bleach, vinegar** (of any sort) or even just moistening the site with **your own urine**.

If you have them available, moistening either **an aspirin tablet or a Vitamin C pill** to make a paste, then applying that paste, as needed, can bring prompt relief. The same works for **cornstarch**, made into a paste. Or if you have access to a health food store, get a tube of "**Sting-Stop**," a topically-applied homeopathic gel that really works quickly and well.

However, as with most matters of "self-health" and first-aid, my first choice of modalities is almost always G-Jo Acupressure -- a kind of acupuncture without needles. For bites and stings, my preference is to use **G-Jo points number 20 and 24**. To find either point, press the appropriate area deeply, using the tip (not the pad or fleshy part) of the thumb or forefinger. Or even use the bent knuckle of a finger, or the eraser tip of a pencil. Probe until you feel a tender "ouch point."

"Trigger" either or both of these points deeply, in a digging, goading massage for a few seconds, until you feel warm, clammy or even a sense of perspiration about to break out on your skin. That's known as an "acupressure reaction," and usually occurs when a good point is triggered deeply for, say, half a minute or so.

G-Jo Point #20 is found between the crown of the *inner* ankle bone and the tip of the heel.

G-Jo Point #24 is found just behind the bony prominence located to the rear of the smallest (fifth) toe, on the outside edge of the foot.

Trigger these points first on the left foot, then on the right. If one side is more tender than the other, focus more upon the tender side. Repeat the find-and-trigger process if, or when, the discomfort returns. Download a free Basic G-Jo Training Chart from The G-Jo Institute website, www.g-jo.com for illustrations of six important G-Jo points. (All the many G-Jo Acupressure points and their hundreds of uses are found in the G-Jo Institute's *Master of G-Jo Acupressure Home-Study Certification Program* can also be found on the website.)

Finally, what happens if you're a person who's prone to anaphylactic shock and you suffer a sting? An emergency procedure -- crude, but apparently effective -- is to apply a **brief electrical shock** at the site. I have heard this may also work for poisonous snake bites ... but please only try it as a last resort!