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## Insect Sting Allergies

There are many allergens that can cause an allergic reaction. One of the most common allergens and hardest to avoid are insect stings. According to the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology, it has been estimated that potentially life-threatening allergic reactions to insect venom occur in 0.4 percent to 0.8 percent of children and 3 percent of adults. Even after experiencing a normal reaction to insect stings, it is possible to experience a more serious allergic reaction at any time during your lifetime.

It is important to avoid insect stings whenever possible, as well as how to respond when someone is suffering from a severe allergic reaction.

### **Insect Stings in the United States:**

According to statistics, there are five insects that cause the majority of allergic reactions in the United States. These insects are honeybees, hornets, wasps, yellow jackets, and fire ants. According to NIOSH, insects sting thousands of people each year, and as many as 90–100 people in the United States die as a result of allergic reactions. This number may be underreported as deaths may be mistakenly diagnosed as heart attacks or sunstroke or may be attributed to other causes. Insect stings can result in any of the following symptoms:

- Pain
- Redness
- Swelling (in the area of sting and sometimes beyond)
- Flushing
- Hives
- Itching
- Anaphylaxis

### **Anaphylaxis:**

Anaphylaxis is the most serious reaction to allergens there is.

Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening whole-body allergic reaction that can impair your breathing, cause a dramatic drop in your blood pressure, and affect your heart rate. Anaphylaxis requires immediate medical treatment, including an injection of epinephrine and a trip to a hospital emergency room. If it is not treated properly, anaphylaxis can be fatal.

**Best Practices in Avoiding Insect Sting Allergic Reactions:**

- Avoid stinging insects whenever possible.
- If you know you have severe reactions to insect stings, do not complete work tasks that put you at great risk of being stung.
- Inspect work areas prior to completing any work to ensure there are no insect nests that could be disturbed.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants in case of an insect attack.
- Have an EPI pen on hand in case of a sting, and ensure your coworkers know where it is. If you suspect someone is suffering from some type of serious allergic reaction, immediately call 911, even if an EPI pen has been used.