

Emergency Services

## Insect Bites

An insect bite or sting can show up as a red lump in the skin that sometimes has a tiny hole in its centre. Bites or stings can be from mosquitoes, fleas, ants, bees, wasps, spiders, bedbugs, or other insects.

Signs of an insect bites include pain, itching, redness and swelling. These usually disappear in 2 to 3 days.

### How to care for yourself at home

- Wash the area with soap and cool water. Keep the area clean and dry.
- If you are having pain, take medicine such as acetaminophen (Tylenol or store brand) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, or store brand).
- To reduce the swelling and soothe the itching, try:
  - Cold compresses for up to 6 hours. After 6 hours, warm compresses might feel soothing.
  - An ointment for itching (anti-itch) such as one with calamine in it.
  - A paste made by mixing a small amount of baking soda with water.
- **Do not** scratch the area. If you scratch the bite, it can take longer to heal and it could get infected.

### When to get help

Some people are allergic to certain insect bites or stings and can have a severe reaction.

**Call 9-1-1 right away** if you have any of these signs of a severe allergic reaction:

- Wheezing or trouble breathing
- Swelling of throat or tongue

**See your family doctor** or go to a walk-in clinic if you notice any of the following:

- Your bite or sting area does not get better in 4 to 5 days.
- The instructions in this sheet do not help ease the swelling or itching.
- The area becomes red, warm, tender, and swollen beyond the area of the bite or sting. These are signs of infection.
- You have a fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F).

### To learn more, it's good to ask

- Your family doctor
- Your pharmacist
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online at [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca)

Adapted from 'EB.200.B546 Insect Bites' (February 2012) with permission from Vancouver Coastal Health.

[www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca)

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

Catalogue # 264472 (June 2015)

To order: <https://patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca>