



## **STINGING INSECT ALLERGY**

In the Capital Region, bees are the most common stinging insects to produce an allergic reaction. In other parts of the U.S., fire ants are also a common stinging insect.

Honeybees, wasps, yellow jacket and hornets inject venom into their victims at the site of the sting. Most people develop a mild reaction to the venom with symptoms such as local pain, itching, redness or swelling. Usually such symptoms last a few hours, but on occasion may last longer.

Some people experience a severe reaction to insect stings which can be life threatening. Severe allergic reactions may develop rapidly and can involve more than one organ system. Symptoms of a severe allergic reaction include: itching and hives over different parts of the body, difficulty breathing or swallowing, swelling in the throat or tongue, dizziness, drop in blood pressure, stomach cramping, nausea, diarrhea, and loss of consciousness. These symptoms require immediate emergency medical treatment.

## **AVOIDING INSECT STINGS**

The following instructions will decrease the chance of exposure to stinging insects:

1. Wear shoes outdoors at all times.
2. Wear clothing colors not attractive to insects, such as white, gray and red.
3. Wear garments that fit close to the body. Insects can become trapped in loose fitting clothing.
4. Avoid using scented soaps, cosmetics and perfumes.
5. Stay away from insect feeding grounds (flower beds, fields of clover, garbage and orchards with ripe fruit).
6. Keep automobile windows closed. Aside from the possibility of a sting, stinging insects in a car can arouse such terror in a sting sensitive person as to create an irresponsible driver.
7. If it is necessary to dispose of garbage, spray the area first with an effective rapid-acting insecticide.
8. Wasp or hornet nests or beehives noted in the vicinity of the patient's home should be destroyed by a professional exterminator.