

# Summer bug bite? Expert gives answers on care

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Bugs are a part of summer, like it or not.

While many times bug bites are little more than an irritating inconvenience, some can trigger a [medical emergency](#), according to the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), which offered tips on telling one from the other.

"While most bug bites or stings are minor and can be treated at home, some reactions can quickly become severe or life-threatening," said Dr. Gillian Schmitz, president of ACEP. "It's important to pay attention to certain symptoms or allergic reactions and seek emergency care when necessary."

Most people can treat [wasp, bee or hornet stings](#) at home with an ice pack and an over-the-counter remedy for itching, pain or swelling, according to ACEP.

That's true if the swelling is limited to the area where the sting happened or there are no signs of a severe allergic reaction. Go to the nearest emergency department if you have trouble breathing, dizziness or facial, mouth, lip or tongue swelling.

Call 911 immediately, if someone appears to be experiencing [anaphylaxis](#), a severe and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction. Anaphylaxis can be triggered by insect stings, certain foods, medications or latex.

Anyone who knows they have this risk, or their parent or guardian, should always carry injectable epinephrine. This should be administered during anaphylaxis, if it is available.

"Preventive measures, such as applying bug spray or wearing appropriate clothing for outside activities, can help avoid pesky bites," Schmitz said. "But knowing when to go to the emergency department could save a life."

Another concerning bug interaction is having a [tick](#) embed itself in your skin. If this happens, it's important to remove the tick quickly.

Do not pour chemicals on it or try to forcefully remove it. Instead, use clean tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible, then pull upward with a steady motion. Avoid twisting or jerking the tick. An infection can develop if parts of it break off and remain in the skin.

Go to the doctor if the tick cannot be safely removed.

Other signs that [medical attention](#) is necessary include a "bullseye rash," or spots on the palms or soles that could indicate a [tick-borne illness](#) such as [Lyme disease](#) or [Rocky Mountain spotted fever](#).

[Mosquito bites](#) are often a nuisance that is more itchy than painful. You can treat bites with over-the-counter sprays, creams, or medications to reduce swelling.

If you develop persistent flu-like symptoms including fever, head or body ache, or upset stomach, however, it could be a sign of a mosquito-borne illness. These include [Zika](#) and [West Nile](#) virus.

Sickness with a mosquito-borne illness can progress to include neck stiffness, confusion, changes to vision or other functions related to the brain, [nervous system](#), or [spinal cord](#), so you should seek [emergency care](#) with any flu-like symptoms.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on preventing [tick bites and removing them](#).

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