

On The Look Out For Yellow Jackets: *Protect Yourself From A Lurking Danger*

(NAPSA)—Chances are, if you see a lot of black and yellow insects in late summer and fall, they're yellow jackets. A queen yellow jacket builds her nest and lays eggs in the spring; by late summer she is surrounded by a full colony of thriving subjects that seem to love outdoor food or drink.


For most people, being stung is a nuisance, but for some, a yellow jacket sting can cause a life-threatening allergic reaction known as anaphylaxis. You can take these precautions:

- Always wear shoes when outdoors
- Only drink from containers you can see inside—insects like to hide in canned drinks, and you can't see them there
- Avoid strong perfume
- Keep outdoor areas free of garbage
- Have a professional remove any nests or hives on your property

And if you are allergic to insect stings, carry an epinephrine auto-injector and see an allergist for advice on the best methods of protection from dangerous reactions.

Are You Allergic?

A normal reaction to a yellow jacket sting may cause swelling and redness of the affected area. A local allergic reaction can cause more severe swelling affecting even an entire arm or leg, which develops over two days and lasts up to a week. In contrast, a generalized anaphylactic reaction usually begins within minutes of the sting and can include hives and swelling covering large areas of the body, vomiting or diarrhea,

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throat tightness with difficulty breathing, and a sudden drop in blood pressure with severe dizziness or unconsciousness.

A person experiencing anaphylaxis needs immediate emergency medical care. Epinephrine—which many ambulances cannot carry—should be administered without delay and professional medical care sought immediately.

An Ounce Of Prevention

Doctors recommend that anyone who has ever had an unusual reaction to an insect sting see an allergist for tests to determine whether the reaction was indeed allergic. If so, the allergist will probably prescribe one or more units of self-injectable epinephrine, such as an EpiPen® epinephrine auto-injector, to be carried at all times. EpiPen auto-injectors are a portable and easy-to-administer form of epinephrine, a drug that can help stabilize an anaphylactic reaction and buy time for the patient to reach the emergency room. Epinephrine is the only known antidote for severe anaphylaxis, although some people will also need intravenous fluids and oxygen.

Long-Term Prevention

The allergist may also recommend venom immunotherapy

(allergy shots) for patients at high risk for anaphylaxis. Through a series of shots containing small amounts of the allergic substance, the body is reacquainted with the allergen in order to prevent dangerous reactions in the future. Although it is usually necessary to complete at least five years of immunotherapy, research shows that it is fully effective within the first few months in reducing a person's risk of anaphylaxis by more than 95 percent.

“No matter what kind of reaction to insect stings you may have, prevention is the key to protecting yourself,” says David Golden, MD, the head of the Insect Allergy Research Project at Johns Hopkins University Asthma and Allergy Center. “If you do have an allergy to insect stings, you should also be sure to carry an EpiPen with you at all times. You can never be too careful when it comes to preventing anaphylaxis.”

Epinephrine is ordinarily administered with extreme caution to patients who have heart disease. Side effects of epinephrine may include increase in heart rate and blood pressure, headaches and shakiness. Patients should be instructed carefully by a physician about the circumstances under which this life-saving medication is used.

With a few precautions in mind, everyone can enjoy summer and fall outdoors.

EpiPen is marketed by Dey, L.P. For further information, visit www.deyinc.com.