

STINGING INSECTS

INFORMATION & RESOURCES ON HOW TO AVOID STINGS FROM BEES AND WASPS

Bees are one of the most important creatures on earth. Without them, crops would not be pollinated, having grave effects on our food supply, animals and the economy. Though only a few rare bee species are endangered, most bees are not, however, their numbers have been dwindling due to several factors including the increased used of pesticides.

To some people, a sting from a bee or wasp can be deadly due to a severe allergic reaction. Anaphylactic shock can occur and immediate medical attention is required or the sting is fatal. It is important to understand the behavior and traits of these insects to avoid a painful sting whether someone is allergic or not.

There are over 416 varieties of bees in New York State. Honeybees and several other bees common to New York (Bumble, Sweat, Digger and Carpenter) are typically not as aggressive as wasps and will only sting if they feel that they or their colony are being threatened. Once they sting a pheromone is released signaling danger to other bees. Male honey and carpenter bees do not sting. Honey bees have barbed stingers so they can only sting once. Other bees can sting multiple times. Nesting can occur in the ground, wood structures, trees and crevices in homes.¹



There are thousand of varieties of wasps. The most common found in New York are Paper Wasps, Mud Wasps, Yellowjackets and Hornets. Yellowjackets are considered more aggressive because they are attracted to food and sweet smelling items. Wasps do not have barbed stingers, so they can sting multiple times. Wasps tend to nest in crevices and corners of homes and other structures and some nest in the ground. Hornets tend to nest in aerial locations.²

¹ Cornell University ²PestWiki

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- If you know you are allergic, always carry an Epi-pen in areas where there is a possibility of contact. Let others know that you are allergic and where to find your Epi-pen. Do not work alone outdoors.
- Regularly inspect areas of your home or workplace where nests may develop such as attics, eaves, basements and vents. Also inspect areas for ground nests and trees for aerial nests.
- If a nest is found, either call a pest removal service or use a pesticide at night when wasps are less active. Wear protective clothing and keep a safe distance. Do not attempt to eliminate a nest if you are allergic.
- If you are spending time outdoors, avoid scented lotions, perfumes and bath products. Also keep your feet covered and do not wear brightly colored clothing or floral patterns.
- When eating outdoors, unpack your food as you are about to eat and clean up immediately after you are finished. Discard items away from where you picnic.
- Routinely clean trash receptacles.

IF YOU ARE STUNG:

- If you experience **Anaphylactic Shock** (severe swelling, difficulty breathing, light-headedness, loss of consciousness), seek medical attention immediately and use an Epi-pen if available.
- Wash wound with soap and water.
- Do not squeeze as the venom will spread. Use tweezers to remove stinger if it is still in the wound.
- Apply an ice pack for twenty minutes.
- Take an ibuprofen for pain or an antihistamine for itching.

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