



**University of North Carolina Wilmington  
Abrons Student Health Center**

**INSTRUCTION SHEET:  
BEE STING, WHOLE BODY REACTION**

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed a whole-body allergic reaction to a bee/wasp sting.

Bee stings most often cause only a local reaction: temporary swelling, pain, and redness at the sting sites.

Rarely, a whole-body allergic reaction occurs; this reaction is serious, and must be treated aggressively; shock and even death can result if the reaction is not reversed.

Your allergic reaction has been successfully controlled at the Student Health Center. Continuing treatment at home is necessary to prevent the reaction from recurring.

**MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR BEE STING REACTION:**

1. Rest at home.
2. Take over-the-counter antihistamines: In the morning, take a non-sedating antihistamine such as loratadine, 10 mg daily. At night, take diphenhydramine (Benadryl), 25 mg, 1 or 2 every 6 hours for itching, rash, and swelling. The main side effect of diphenhydramine is drowsiness, so do not drive, operate machinery, climb a ladder, etc., while taking the medicine. Stop taking the antihistamines when the itching, rash, and swelling are gone.
3. The provider may prescribe other medication such as prednisone to counter the reaction. Take this medication as directed.
4. Should symptoms of serious, whole-body allergic reaction reappear (chances are small), go immediately to the nearest emergency department. Specifically, seek attention if you develop: whole-body rash and itching, difficulty breathing (wheezing, noise on breathing in), or become shocky (pale, sweaty, faint, lightheaded, confused).
5. Should you later develop infection in a sting site, return promptly to the Student Health Center or see another provider. Signs of infection include: pus draining from the bite site, increasing redness/swelling/warmth around the wound, or red streaks spreading from the site.
6. Realize you are highly allergic to bees. Avoid areas that attract bees if possible. Don't wear bright colors or perfume outdoors. Strongly consider keeping an allergic reaction kit immediately available for self-treatment. The Student Health Center may prescribe such a kit, or you can schedule a follow-up appointment with your personal/referral provider to receive instructions and a prescription for a kit. Your provider can also advise you about desensitization treatment (to make you less prone to severe allergic reactions to bees).