


Take the **Bite** out of summer

It's the dreaded part of warm weather: a child's piercing cry coming from a backyard insect sting. Or maybe it's itchy bites keeping a little one awake at night.



The best way to treat a bug bite or sting is to prevent it. When the weather warms, check play areas for hives or nests and carefully dispose of them. When you do your spring landscaping, remember to take care of low brush so you don't offer ticks a place to live. After a spring rain, scour the yard for puddles of water and eliminate them so mosquitoes can't breed.

Take care of outdoor food, because it attracts insects.

Brightly colored clothing and perfumes attract insects too. If you will be spending a lengthy time outside or will be living close to nature in a campground, cover up with insect repellent and clothing.

Avoid being barefoot or drinking sweet drinks outside, as this is an open invitation to insects. Follow directions on the insect repellent in regards to use for children.

We can help our children to enjoy God's world while staying safe. Learning about insect safety is a great way to encourage your child to learn about this fascinating part of God's world.

Remember that dawn and dusk are favorite insect times.

Mosquito bites

are annoying but rarely pose a serious health concern for those of us living in

areas that are not beset with malaria or West Nile virus. A little over-the-counter itch cream or some calamine lotion will be sufficient to ease the itching. While some of us react more strongly to mosquito bites, watch for unusual swelling, redness or skin warm to the touch, as these may be signs of infection. A quick trip to the doctor is advised if you suspect an infection.



In warm wet weather, **ticks** are unwelcome neighbors. Ticks carry serious disease, so it is important to make frequent checks for ticks if you are outside. Ticks are spiders (not insects), but insect



repellant works for them also. If you find a tick, grab it with a tweezers and gently urge it loose by rocking it back and forth. Other methods, like pulling or smothering, can force more tick saliva into the wound. Once removed, thoroughly wash the infected area, and tape the tick to a piece of paper. If symptoms of confusion, fever or lethargy develop, seek a doctor's care as soon as possible. Showing the doctor the tick can aid in diagnosis. Thankfully, most tick bites do not result in serious illness.

While mosquito stings and tick bites are more likely to itch than hurt, the same cannot be said



for **bee** or **wasp** stings. Honeybees, bumble bees, hornets, wasps and yellow jackets are all potential stingers. The advantage of stinging insects is that we often see them coming. One of the best defenses against flying stingers is to teach your children to remain calm and be still when a stinging insect is sighted.

Most stings can be treated by washing the affected area to remove venom, removing any tight-fighting clothing or jewelry, applying ice, and if needed, giving your child a dose of over-the-counter pain reliever. If the stinger is present, use something stiff, like a credit card, to scrape the stinger out. Do work to stay calm, and to help your child to stay calm, to avoid future panic.

Spiders are usually our friends. They keep the insect population at bay and often provide



us with beautiful webs to admire. However, two types of spiders cause us trouble—the black widow and the brown recluse. A link at the end of this article shows a map of

the range of these spiders. They like warm climates and dark, dry places.

God's Creation

Don't let summer insects and spiders keep you from enjoying the wonderful world of nature. Children need time outside, and time with plants and insects to learn and grow and develop. While some insects pose dangers, we have many ways of preventing and treating injury.

We can help our children to enjoy God's world while staying safe. Learning about insect safety is a great way to encourage your child to learn about this fascinating part of God's world. And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds" And it was so" (Gen. 1:24).

Even the creeping, flying insects are an important part of God's earth. He intended them for our good; and it is true that without insects we would not have songbirds that eat them or any of the plants that are pollinated by them. Learning to live with them and ease the pain of our contact with them is one way we learn more about our world and God's love for us.

The following links include handy instruction sheets for treating insect bites from kidshealth.org and a map that shows where spiders thrive.

For Discussion:

- ▶ Is there a family history of severe allergic reactions?
- ▶ What are the most common bites or stings in your area?
- ▶ How can you keep your child safe from insect bites while not encouraging unnecessary fear?

For Further Study:

Insect stings:

http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/sheets/insect_stings_sheet.html

Tick bites:

http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/sheets/tick_bites_sheet.html

Spider bites:

http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/sheets/spider_bites_sheet.html

Map of range of spiders:

www.mayoclinic.com/health/first-aid-spider-bites/FA00048

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