**Allergy reactions** - Seek urgent medical help if any of the following symptoms occur: **difficulty breathing, wheeze, tightness in the throat, faintness or collapse (anaphylaxis).** These severe allergy symptoms can occur with or without hives or generalised swelling.

Hives and swelling can be treated with antihistamines.

**Who needs to know about this allergy?**
It is important to inform the nursery/school and any after-school clubs. Any other carers such as grandparents, relatives and school friends’ parents will also need to know.

**Is insect venom life-long?**
Only 10% of children with mild generalised reactions will have an allergic reaction to subsequent stings. This will not be more severe than the preceding sting. Patients who carry an adrenaline pen are usually followed up at yearly intervals.

**Which patients should be referred to an allergist?**
Patients with local reactions, even if they are large, do not need to see an allergist. Patients who have any generalised allergic reaction after a sting, including those with only a skin rash (hives) should be prescribed and shown how to use an adrenaline pen (auto-injector) by their GP and be referred to an Allergist for further tests and treatment. Adults are sometimes given injections (immuno)therapy, but these are rarely required in children.

**Allergy to Insect Stings**

References

www.allergynorthwest.nhs.uk
What is insect sting allergy?
It is quite normal to have some pain, redness and swelling where you have been stung. Some people consistently have larger reactions around the sting. This is not an allergy but a reaction to the poisons in the sting. A few people have itchy rashes, breathing problems or faintness – this suggests an allergy to the sting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not allergy</th>
<th>Allergy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any swelling, whether large or small at the site of the sting</td>
<td>Hives or swelling not at sting site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redness</td>
<td>Breathing difficulty because of wheeze or throat tightness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>Faintness/collapse</td>
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Which insects are likely to sting me?
In the UK, bees and wasps are most likely to sting people.

When should I worry about an insect sting reaction?
Local reactions, even if large should not be viewed as an allergy, but rather inflammation caused by the venom in the sting. These patients have low risk of severe allergy. Where local reactions are very large or do not settle medical attention should be sought.
Allergic symptoms occur when the venom from the sting triggers the release of chemicals such as histamine. The risk of allergic reactions is greatest if a 2nd sting occurs 2-8 weeks after the first.
People allergic to wasps are unlikely to be allergic to bee.

How can I avoid being stung?
People are most likely to be stung in summer and early autumn.

Wasps build nests in sheltered areas including trees and roof spaces. They are attracted to sweetened and flavoured drinks, fallen ripe fruit, and dust bins. Bright colours can also attract them. Carefully removing ripe fruit, well fitting lids on bins and not leaving opened drinks around can help to prevent insect stings. Local councils can help get rid of nests from homes and gardens.

How serious are insect stings?
The vast majority of insect stings just cause local reactions. Only a small number of stings lead to generalised allergic reactions.

What should I do if my child is stung?
Bees leave a sting behind in the skin and die soon after stinging. Wasps and hornets do not leave their sting or die after stinging. They can sting again. Walk away calmly to prevent getting stung again.

Remove the sting immediately - Remove the sting and venom sac by scraping it out, either with a fingernail, or something with a hard edge such as a credit card, as shown in the picture.
Be careful not to pinch or squeeze the venom sac (e.g. with tweezers) as this might spread the venom further under the skin.

Local and large local reactions - Wash the affected area with water. Ice packs and raising the arm or leg that has been stung can reduce swelling. Painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can be given. Antihistamines can reduce the itch. The swelling will usually start to go down within a few days.