

Staying Safe Around Bees and Wasps

Bee (honey and bumble) and wasp (hornet, yellow jacket, and paper wasp) stings all contain a substance called venom. It is this venom that can cause pain and other symptoms. Bees will aggressively defend their colony. Like bees, wasps will sting in defense of their colony or themselves. Wasps can be a significant nuisance in Maine, especially in mid to late summer when colonies reach peak numbers and become aggressive scavengers, sometimes stinging without being provoked.

How can I protect myself from being stung?

• Don't Attract Them

- Avoid wearing bright colors or flower-patterned clothing.
- Avoid wearing fragrant perfumes, cologne, soaps, or hair products.
- Keep food and drink covered or under screens when eating outdoors.
- Clean up and dispose of food and garbage properly as some insects are attracted to discarded food.

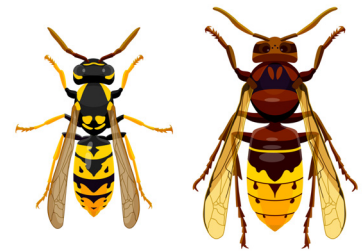
• Avoid Being Attacked

- Remain calm and still if a single bee or wasp is flying around you. Swatting may provoke it to sting.
- If you are attacked by several stinging insects, run to get away from them. Some bees release chemicals when they sting which attracts other nearby bees.
- If a stinging insect flies inside your vehicle, stop the car slowly, and open all the windows.



honey bee

bumble bee



wasp

hornet

If I am stung, what should I do?

Typically, symptoms of a bee or wasp sting are localized pain, swelling, itching, and mild redness at the sting site. While most stings cause only mild discomfort, some may result in severe allergic reactions that require immediate medical care and may cause death. If you have a known allergy to stings from a bee, wasp, yellow jacket, or similar insect you should always carry an anaphylaxis kit and wear a medical ID bracelet or necklace stating your allergy.

First Aid

- Clean the area thoroughly with soap and water.
- Remove the stinger by wiping gauze over the area or by scraping a fingernail over the area.
- Never squeeze the stinger or use tweezers.
- Apply ice to reduce swelling.
- Do not scratch the sting as this may increase swelling, itching, and risk of infection.

Allergic Reactions

Call 911 if any of these signs occur:

- Trouble breathing, wheezing, or shortness of breath.
- Swelling anywhere on the face or in the mouth.
- Throat tightness or difficulty swallowing.
- Feeling faint or dizziness.
- Turning blue.