



AUSTRALIAN RESUSCITATION COUNCIL

GUIDELINE 8.9.4

ENVENOMATION - BEE, WASP and ANT STINGS

INTRODUCTION

Single stings from a bee, wasp or ant, while painful, seldom causes serious problems except for persons who have an allergy to the venom. However, multiple insect stings increase the pain and local skin reaction and may cause serious envenomation or difficulty breathing if the stings occur around the face.

It is important to remember that bee stings with the venom sac attached continue to inject venom into the skin, whilst a single wasp or ant may sting multiple times.

RECOGNITION

Symptoms and signs may include:

- immediate and intense local pain
- local redness and swelling
- allergic reaction (see Guideline 8.23)

Airway obstruction may result from swelling of the face and tongue due to anaphylaxis, or from insect stings in or around the mouth. This may occur immediately or over several hours and always requires urgent medical care.

MANAGEMENT

- Remove the stinging insect from the skin and move the victim to a safe area.
- For a bee sting, remove any remaining stinging apparatus with a sideways scraping motion to avoid squeezing the venom sac.
- Apply a cold compress to help reduce pain and swelling.
- Commence resuscitation if necessary, following the Basic Life Support Flow Chart (Guideline 7).
- If the victim has a history or any signs of allergy, follow Anaphylaxis Guideline 8.23.
- Refer the victim to hospital if they have any tongue or facial stings

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE

Expert consensus opinion

CLASS OF RECOMMENDATION

Class A - Recommended

FURTHER READING

ARC Guideline 7 Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

ARC Guideline 8.23 Anaphylaxis – First Aid Management