

Bees and other stingers (American Hiking Society)

Insects such as bees, wasps, yellow jackets and hornets can leave painful stings, but usually don't attack unless they are attacked first. Unfortunately, an unsuspecting hiker can disturb a hive by accident and will suffer the consequences regardless of intent. If you are traveling with other hikers, make sure you alert those behind you if you notice a nest.

When traveling through the woods, be alert for nests in hollow trees, hanging from branches, under logs, in the ground, and sometimes even in the mud or dirt banks of streams. Remember that bees are attracted to bright colors and sweet smells. Bees are also attracted to swift movements. If you do have a bee encounter, stay calm and move slowly. Don't run unless you're being attacked by a swarm, in which case it's best to submerge yourself in water or take refuge in a vehicle or sealed tent.

If you are stung, try to scrape it out with the flat of a knife or a credit card. The stinger will continue to release venom after the bee is dead, so be quick. Ice packs or cold, wet compresses will ease the pain. If you notice an unusual reaction to the sting, such as extensive swelling, nausea, shortness of breath, or a rapid heart rate, seek medical help immediately as you may be experiencing anaphylaxis - a serious allergic reaction to the venom. If you already know you are allergic to bee stings, you should carry your bee-sting kit with you at all times. Alert your hiking partners to your condition and teach them how to administer the treatment as well.