



# Student Health Center

## UNC Wilmington

### INSTRUCTION SHEET: BEE STING, WHOLE BODY REACTION

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed a whole-body allergic reaction to a bee/wasp sting.

Bee stings most often cause only a local reaction: temporary swelling, pain, and redness at the sting sites. Rarely, a whole-body allergic reaction occurs; this reaction is serious, and must be treated aggressively; shock and even death can result if the reaction is not reversed.

Your allergic reaction has been successfully controlled at the Student Health Center. Continuing treatment at home is necessary to prevent the reaction from recurring.

#### MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR BEE STING REACTION:

- 1- Rest at home.
- 2- Continue diphenhydramine (Benadryl), 25 mg, 1 or 2 every 4 to 6 hours to help minimize the reaction. Take the medicine at least 4 times a day for 24 hours. After 24 hours, titrate the diphenhydramine to control your symptoms: Take 25 or 50 mg, 4 to 6 times a day, depending on how much itching and rash you have. Diphenhydramine is available over-the-counter. The only side effect is drowsiness, so do not drive, operate machinery, climb a ladder, etc., while taking the medicine. Stop the diphenhydramine when your itching and rash are gone.
- 3- The provider may prescribe other medication to counter the reaction. Take this medication as directed.
- 4- Should symptoms of serious, whole-body allergic reaction reappear (chances are small), go immediately to the nearest emergency department. Specifically, seek attention if you develop: whole-body rash and itching, difficulty breathing (wheezing, noise on breathing in), or become shocky (pale, sweating, fainting, lightheaded, confused).
- 5- Should you later develop infection in a sting site, return promptly to the Student Health Center. Signs of infection include: pus draining from the bite site, increasing redness/swelling/warmth around the wound, or red streaks spreading from the site.
- 6- Realize you are highly allergic to bees. Avoid areas attracting bees if possible. Don't wear bright colors or perfume outdoors. Strongly consider keeping an allergic reaction kit immediately available for self-treatment. The Student Health Center may prescribe such a kit, or you can schedule a follow-up appointment with your personal/referral doctor to receive instructions and a prescription for a kit. Your doctor can also advise you about desensitization treatment (to make you less prone to severe allergic reactions to bees).