



THE STING OF SPRING



This week’s topic covers a direct hazard, the stings of spring. I imagine the first thought that pops into your head when talking about stings are insects and rightfully so considering their capabilities. However, thinking more outside the box, the stings of spring have a variety of sources and meaning; from poison ivy producing a stinging itch (which I have been so lucky to experience many times) to the sting of paying for a Doctor or Emergency Room visit that could’ve been prevented. No matter how being stung affects you, preparation is your best defense.

INSECT STINGS - If you have known allergies to insect stings, remember to carry an insect sting kit or an epinephrine (epi) pen. Otherwise follow these tips to avoid insect stings:

- Don't wear perfume or scented lotions.
- Avoid brightly colored clothing, Wear tan, khaki, and dark-colored clothes.
- Don't leave sugary drinks outside, use covered containers to limit their odor.
- Don't picnic, sit, or stand near trash cans, fallen fruit, or another wasp/yellow jacket feeding sites.
- Properly dispose of any nests near your home, Read the MSDS of any chemical prior to using
- Don't approach an active nest; if a nest is disturbed, **RUN AWAY** from attacking wasps. (Was it necessary for me to tell you that?)
- Check your food and drinks before consumption - Stings inside the mouth and throat are particularly dangerous due to the potential of swelling and closing off the windpipe.
- Don't swat or move rapidly when a wasp visits you or your food; move slowly! (Easier said than done.)

First Aid for an insect bite or sting:

1. Examine the sting site closely, looking for the stinger that may still be in the skin.
2. If a stinger is visible and accessible, attempt to remove it by carefully scraping it and the attached poison sac from the skin. Don't use tweezers, fingers or anything that might squeeze more poison into the body.
3. To reduce the irritation at the site of the sting, apply rubbing alcohol or a paste of baking soda and water. Ice can also be used. Never use alcohol near the eyes.
4. If the sting is in the mouth, give the person a mouthwash of one teaspoonful of baking soda in a glass of water, or a piece of ice to suck on. Monitor the casualty for swelling or difficulty breathing. If symptoms occur, get medical help.



STRETCHING – As we adjust to the warmer weather, our trips outside will need some adjustment as well. Whether at home or on the job the benefits to stretching are twofold - injury prevention and flexibility increase. See below on proper stretching techniques that ultimately translate to a reduced risk of getting stung by injury.

- **Warm up first** - Stretching muscles when they're cold increases your risk of pulled muscles. Warm up by walking while gently pumping your arms or do a favorite exercise at low intensity for five minutes.
- **Hold each stretch for at least 30 seconds** - It takes time to lengthen tissues safely. For most of your muscle groups, if you hold the stretches for at least 30 seconds, you'll need to do each stretch only once.
- **Don't bounce** - Bouncing as you stretch can cause small tears in the muscle, which leave scar tissue as the muscle heals. The scar tissue tightens the muscle even further, making you even less flexible — and more prone to pain.
- **Focus on a pain-free stretch** - If you feel pain as you stretch, you've gone too far. Back off to the point where you don't feel any pain, then hold the stretch.
- **Relax and breathe freely** - Don't hold your breath while you're stretching.
- **Stretch both sides** - Make sure your joint range of motion is as equal as possible on each side of your body.
- **Stretch before and after activity** - Light stretching after your warm-up followed by a more thorough stretching regimen after your workout is your best bet.

PLANTS – We eat many plants, herbs and so forth in our daily diet and although vegetation helps sustain life, some plants, trees, or shrubs are harmful even potentially fatal. Many poisonous plants are so common and seemingly harmless you do not suspect their toxic qualities. Some of these ornamental plants or flowers that contain deadly poison are found in your yard. The following chart lists some of the more common poisonous plants, the entire list can be found here: http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/lawn_garden/poison/poison.html