

Multiple wasp stings requiring emergency medical treatment

What happened?

A chainsaw operator was cutting scrub underneath an 11kV overhead powerline, next to a fence line. Hidden in the undergrowth was a wasps nest which he had unknowingly stood on.

Under the sound of his saw, with ear defenders on and his face visor down, he did not notice the wasp swarm. He initially thought the fence had been electrified against stock, and that he was receiving minor electric shocks from this, he worked on for a moment trying to avoid contact with the fence, it was only when he was continuing to feel sharp pains away from the fence did he realise that he was being stung.

He received over 40 stings in total.

He was attended by the worksite first aider. Due to the volume of stings received, the first aider was concerned enough that he took the operator to the local Accident and Emergency Department.

He was kept in the hospital for the rest of the day under observation. During this time, he went into a reactive shock, and was administered adrenaline and given pain relief.

The Operative was discharged from hospital later that evening. He returned to work after the weekend, on the next working day, to normal duties.

Due to the number of stings that were received, there is a medical concern that he may now have developed a hypersensitisation to wasp stings, as a precaution, the operative has been prescribed an epinephrine auto-injector (EpiPen) to be used immediately if he is stung again in the future.

What can we learn?

Most insect bites and stings will cause a red, swollen lump to develop on the skin. This may be painful and, in some cases, become very itchy.

Most insect bites and stings are not serious, and the pain and skin reaction will recede within a few hours or days. Occasionally they can cause a more serious prolonged reaction which may require further medical treatment.



With multiple stings -- more than 10-20 -- but no immediate evidence of an allergic reaction, you may still need a period of observation in the emergency department or admission to hospital. As mentioned above, it wasn't until the operative was at the hospital that he went into shock.

The most extreme reaction to an insect sting is anaphylaxis (commonly referred to as anaphylactic shock). It can be a life-threatening and urgent medical attention is required.

Basic Precautions

- Cover exposed skin – cover your skin by wearing long sleeves and trousers
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin
- Avoid using products with strong perfumes as these can attract insects
- If you disturb a nest, remain calm and move away slowly. If you encounter wasps, hornets or bees – do not wave your arms or swat at them, this will only make them more aggressive.

UK Bugs and insects that bite or sting

- Wasps
- Hornets
- Bees
- Horseflies
- Ticks
- Mosquitoes
- Spiders
- Midges

Remember, nests can be hidden in long grass and scrub. Be aware of where you are putting your feet when moving through thick undergrowth.



Allergic reactions on site

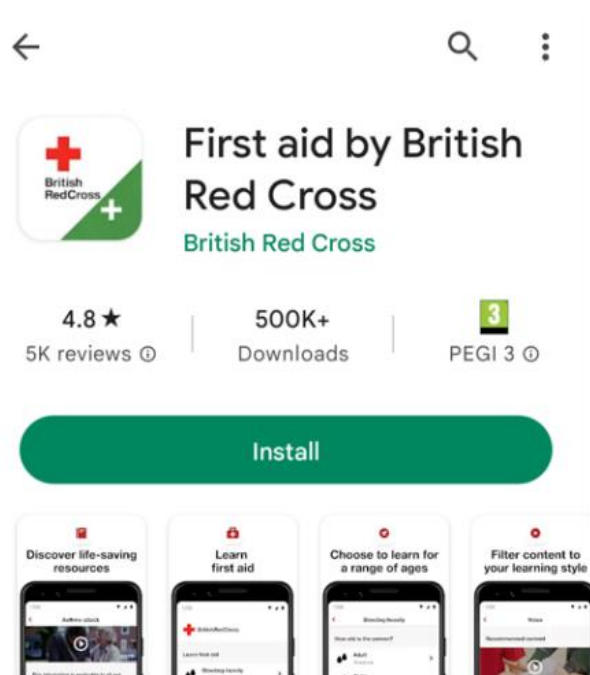
If you have a known allergy or a known reaction to a substance, animal, or insect, you should inform the foreman and the site first aider, to ensure they are aware of your medical condition and where you keep your medication if it is required. You may need to show them how it works in the event you have a reaction and are not able to administer it yourself.

All casualties who have had an intramuscular or subcutaneous (under the skin) injection of adrenaline, must be seen and medically checked by a healthcare professional as soon as possible after the injection has been given.

British Red Cross First Aid App

Ensure you have installed the free British red cross app on your phone. This gives quick and easy access to 19 first aid topics with simple step by step guides on what to do.

There is a section specific to allergies/ anaphylactic shock with a guide on what to do and symptoms to look out for if you think someone is having a reaction.



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