

SKIN AND SOFT TISSUE INFECTIONS

Insect Bites and Stings

([CKS Insect bites and stings](#))

Antimicrobial prescribing strategy for insect, spider bites, and stings in adults, young people, and children aged one month and over.

Be aware that a rapid-onset skin reaction is likely to be an inflammatory or allergic reaction rather than an infection.

Most insect bites or stings DO NOT require antibiotics.

Key points:

- Assess the type of severity of the bite or sting to identify a local inflammatory or allergic skin reaction.
- For people with a known or suspected tick bite, follow [Lyme disease](#). A bullseye rash (erythema migrans) is a sign of Lyme disease.
- **Do not offer an antibiotic if there are no signs or symptoms of infection.** People may wish to consider oral antihistamines (in people aged over 1 year) to help relieve itching. Note that some antihistamines cause sedation, which may help at night.

If antibiotics are indicated as there are signs and symptoms of infection, please see the [Cellulitis guideline](#).

Patient advice:

- Skin redness and itching are common and may last for up to 10 days. It is unlikely that the skin will become infected.
- Avoid scratching to reduce inflammation and risk of infection.
- Seek medical help if symptoms develop or worsen rapidly or significantly at any time, or they become systematically unwell.

Consider referral or seek specialist advice for people if:

- They are systemically unwell.
- They are severely immunocompromised and have symptoms or signs of an infection.
- They have had a previous systemic allergic reaction to the same type of bite or sting.
- The bite or sting is in the mouth or throat, or around the eyes.
- It has been caused by an unusual or exotic insect.
- They have a fever or persisting lesions associated with a bite or sting that occurred while travelling outside the UK.

Insect bites and stings images

- [NHS website](#)
- [DermNet](#)

APC Patient Information Leaflet [here](#)

Insect bites is one of the conditions that can be managed by community pharmacy via [Pharmacy First](#).