

SKIN AND SOFT TISSUE INFECTIONS

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 will not need 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 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](#)

Version Control- Acne			
Version	Author(s)	Date	Changes
V1.0	Shary Walker, Interface and Formulary Pharmacist	16/12/21	New APC guideline for insect bites and stings in line with NICE NG182 .