

Scorpion Sting

Definition

- Sting from a scorpion
- Also suspect for new onset of local pain after a scorpion is seen in the area
- The main symptoms are pain, tingling and numbness at the sting site

Health Information

Symptoms of a Scorpion Sting

- All scorpion stings cause pain, tingling, and numbness at the sting site.
- Pain starts right away. The pain can be severe for the first 2 hours. Symptoms around the site start to go away over the next 24 hours.
- There is often no swelling or redness of the sting.
- About 10% of stings also cause waves of tingling. The tingling travels up the stung arm or leg. It feels like an electric shock.
- Serious symptoms are rare. They include muscle twitching or rapid eye movements. Pain, tingling and numbness can also spread to all the arms and legs. The most serious symptoms are trouble breathing or swallowing.
- Most scorpion stings do not need to be seen

Scorpion Facts

- Scorpions look like tiny lobsters in front. In back, they have a long tail with a stinger at the end. It curls up and over their bodies. They have 8 legs, like spiders.
- Venom: The stinger has venom. The venom causes pain and other symptoms when it is shot into the skin.
- Size: average size is 3 inches (7.5 cm). Range in size from 1 - 7 inches (2.5 to 18 cm).
- Scorpions are most active at night. They like dark and moist places.
- There are about 40 types of scorpions in the US.
- All scorpions can sting, causing pain, tingling, and numbness at the sting site. Note: Some stings do not inject venom and then cause no symptoms.
- The only US scorpion that can cause serious symptoms is the bark scorpion. Even they only cause serious symptoms 5% of the time.
- Children and older adults are more likely to have severe symptoms. People with chronic medical problems are also at higher risk.

Care Advice

1. Overview on Scorpion Stings:

- The main symptoms are pain, tingling and numbness only in the sting area.
- Symptoms shouldn't be any worse than a bad bee sting.
- Sometimes, the arm or leg with the sting gets waves of tingling and pain.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Clean the Sting Site:

- Wash the sting site well with soap and water.

3. **Cold Pack for Pain:**
 - For pain or swelling, use a cold pack. You can also use ice wrapped in a wet cloth.
 - Put it on the sting for 20 minutes as needed.
4. **Pain Medicine:**
 - To help with the pain, give an acetaminophen product (such as Tylenol).
 - Another choice is an ibuprofen product (such as Advil).
 - Use as needed.
5. **Treatment of Painful Shock Waves up the Arm or Leg:**
 - Until they go away, keep using the pain medicine.
 - Also, try to avoid bumping that arm or leg.
6. **What to Expect:**
 - Pain at the sting site is usually gone by 24 hours.
 - Shock waves of tingling also gone by 24 hours.
 - Numbness and tingling around the sting may last 2 to 3 days.
7. **Prevent Scorpion Stings:**
 - Do not walk barefoot in the desert, especially at night. Scorpions are most active at night.
 - Check your shoes before you put them on (shake them).
 - Shake out clothes, towels, bedding, and sleeping bags before using.
 - Roll back your sheets at night, before getting into bed.
8. **Prevent Scorpions Around Your Home:**
 - Clear away any piles of wood or debris that are near the house. Scorpions hide there.
 - Weatherstrip your windows and doors.
 - Place the legs of a baby's crib in wide-mouthed glass jars. Scorpions can't climb glass.
 - Hire a pest control expert for repeated problems.

Call Your Doctor If

- Serious symptoms occur (such as muscle twitching)
- Pain or tingling starts on both sides of the body
- Sting starts to look infected
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

Author: Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP

Copyright 2000-2022 Schmitt Pediatric Guidelines LLC

Disclaimer: This health information is for educational purposes only. You the reader assume full responsibility for how you choose to use it. The information contained in this handout should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. Listing of any resources does not imply an endorsement.