



Bee stings can be fatal

Last year about 100 deaths in this country were probably caused by insect stings. Those who think they are hypersensitive should take precautions—their lives may depend on it!

By **JOE DOAN**

The tragic death last summer of Gerald Dearie, the young superintendent of Medinah (Ill.) CC, as the result of an insect sting, points up the need for taking the greatest possible precaution to avoid being stung by bees, wasps, yellow jackets and hornets. If a person is stung, he should get immediate treatment. As happened in the case of Dearie, death can come quickly from a sting.

It has been quite definitely established that Gerry lived no longer than 45 minutes after being stung on the leg. It was perhaps 15 minutes before he noticed any ill effects. Then, after complaining of an itching in his feet and shortness of breath, he collapsed. He died a few minutes later, after being carried into the Medinah clubhouse. His death was attributed to edema, an accumulation of watery fluid in the tissues. This resulted in a severe drop in blood pressure, disruption of the circulatory system and ultimately heart failure.

His life undoubtedly would have been saved if epinephrine (adrenalin) had been immediately administered. This drug quickly

restores circulating blood volume and blood pressure by constricting the capillary bed. Emergency insect sting treatment kits contain epinephrine. In the case of severe shock, it is recommended that the drug be injected both intravenously and subcutaneously (beneath the skin). The treatment kit also contains chewable antihistamine tablets, which are taken to counteract itching and swelling. A tourniquet and antiseptic are also included in emergency kits.

People who are known to be hypersensitive to the stings of the order Hymenoptera (bees, wasps, yellow jackets and hornets) should protect themselves by carrying emergency kits with them. Especially, if, like superintendents, course workers, pros and golfers, there are flowers, clover and fruit trees in the vicinity where they are working or playing.

Hollister - Stier Laboratories, Spokane, Wash., the largest allergy products manufacturer in the United States, makes an emergency kit. It is called AnaKit and is approximately the size of a box of cough drops.

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BEE STINGS

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Allergists agree that people are born with immunity to the allergens that are introduced by an insect sting. But after a person is stung once, it is believed that he becomes sensitized to the venom that is exuded through the insect's stinger. To what degree, isn't known. Some people can withstand numerous stings. Others may become hypersensitive after being stung only once or twice.

A sting that causes swelling, tightness of the chest, sneezing, coughing and a lump in the area of the sting should warn the victim to see an allergist or his doctor.

It is known that Gerry Dearie had been stung by insects before his fatal mishap. This has been verified by his wife, who was playing golf at Medinah the day he was fatally stung. She is sure that he never had experienced any extreme reaction to a sting. According to people at the club, he didn't appear to be alarmed at having been stung. According to allergists, some people can be stung 10, 20 or 30 times, even more, without suffering ill effects.

The use of skin tests in determining sensitivity to insect stings is equivocal, some allergists say. They are valid enough for people who are hypersensitive, but for

others there is some question of their reliability. Usually, a patient who has suffered symptoms of severe anaphylaxis (allergic reaction or shock) following a sting, will have an immediate wheal reaction upon being scratched with a testing extract. A wheal is a welt or blister, accompanied by a burning or itching sensation. However, some people who are not sensitive to an insect's allergens will register a false positive reaction when a test is given.

A person is made immune or desensitized to insect stings through the injection of antigens that are extracted from whole insect bodies. Doses are small to begin with and are increased to build up immunity. The treatments may last for anywhere from one to three years, depending upon the degree of the patient's hypersensitivity. Treatments of hypersensitive people are said to be 95 per cent effective when they are regularly made.

The best immunity against stinging insects is, of course, to avoid them. Hymenoptera, entomologists say, only sting in self-defense or defense of the nest. They are attracted by floral odors. After-shave lotion, cologne, hair and other cosmetic preparations attract them. No really effective insect repellent has been developed that protects against bees, wasps,

hornets and yellow jackets.

Around a golf course, bees usually nest in hollow trees. They usually travel in a straight line and sting only when a person runs into them. Entomologists say that bees are angered by dark colors; light pastel shades don't seem to annoy them. Many times they congregate around unruffled water surfaces. Beekeepers have found that a non-perfumed deodorant or germicidal soap are a deterrent to stinging. But the cardinal rule in the apiary is to move slowly because bees are extremely sensitive to air motion.

Hornets nest in woodlots, orchards, pastures and heavily-wooded areas, usually from one to 10 feet off the ground. Wasps prefer weathered wood. Yellow jacket nests are located in the ground.

Wasps feed on insects which they sting to death, so they usually fly around with their stingers out. They are attracted by juices and saps as well as spoiling food, soft drinks, leather, and even perspiration. Birdbaths are a favorite cooling off spot for them, and many times, eaves are their favorite nesting places.

All of these insects are attracted by bright colors. They live in colonies, and when you see a few of them flying around, you can be sure there is a colony nearby. A golfer who goes into a woods or grove of trees to retrieve an errant shot should be alert to the insect menace.

Insects aren't people hunters. They don't sting for sustenance as do mosquitos, flies and fleas. When they are approached in the open, the best thing to do is stand still or move back slowly and cautiously. If they alight on the body or clothing, forbearance is the best protection. Slapping at an insect or attempting to brush it away puts it on the defense. A stinger lashes out and there is always that grim and rare chance that the insect could deliver a lethal blow. □

Don't take chances

If you or members of your club or their guests think there is a remote possibility of being allergic with attendant dangers when stung by an insect, try to do the following:

- If stung, immediately remove the stinger;
- If more than normal stinging or swelling occurs, get first aid;
- Be certain to tell someone immediately about the sting so they may transmit the information to a doctor if that eventuality should arise.
- If naturally allergic—**Be Careful!**

These are hints that may prevent a tragic occurrence as a consequence of an insect sting. They are only a summary guideline and not meant to substitute for the ministrations of a doctor. It is difficult to know to what degree people are sensitized, so don't take chances.

Superintendents may be wise to clip this page from *GOLFDOM* and post it where it can be useful in the event of an insect sting.