

# Insect Bites and Stings

As spring arrives and people are outdoors more, you may find yourself with more bites and stings. Most insect bites and stings are not serious and will get better within a few hours or days.

## What to do if you've been bitten or stung:

To treat an insect bite or sting:

- Remove the sting or tick if it's still in the skin
- Wash the affected area with soap and water
- Apply a cold compress (such as a flannel or cloth cooled with cold water) or an ice pack to any swelling for at least 10 minutes
- Raise or elevate the affected area if possible, as this can help reduce swelling
- Avoid scratching the area, to reduce the risk of infection
- Avoid traditional home remedies, such as vinegar and bicarbonate of soda, as they're unlikely to help

The pain, swelling and itchiness can sometimes last a few days. Ask your pharmacist about medicines that can help, such as painkillers, creams for itching and antihistamines.

Read more about treating [insect bites and stings](#).

Read more here for NICE Guidance [on insect bites and stings: antimicrobial prescribing](#).

## When to get medical advice

Contact us or call NHS 111 for advice if:

- You're worried about a bite or sting
- Your symptoms do not start to improve within a few days or are getting worse
- You've been stung or bitten in your mouth or throat, or near your eyes
- A large area (around 10cm or more patch of skin) around the bites becomes red and swollen
- You have symptoms of a wound infection, such as pus or increasing pain, swelling or redness

- You have symptoms of a more widespread infection, such as a high temperature, swollen glands and other flu-like symptoms

## Self-care Guidance

SWL CCGs (NHS Croydon, NHS Merton, NHS Richmond, NHS Sutton and NHS Wandsworth) are committed to delivering best value by ensuring that we use our resources well. To help us to support the implementation of the NHS England guidance 'Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care' (March 2018), SWL CCGs no longer support the routine prescribing of health supplements and medications that can be bought over the counter for minor conditions, self-limiting and short-term illnesses. For the SWL position statement please click [here](#).

Why are we doing this?

- We want to help people lead longer, healthier lives and support them to take better care of their health. Self-care is about avoiding becoming ill and seeking help when needed. By managing minor health needs through self-care, it will help to ease the pressure on the NHS.
- SWL CCGs have a set amount of money to pay for the health services that are needed and have a duty to spend that money wisely.

What treatment and preparations are included?

- Pharmacy Only (P) and General Sales Lists (GSL) treatments that can be purchased over the counter from a pharmacy with or without advice
- GSL treatments (including a patient information leaflet) that can be purchased from other retail outlets such as supermarkets, petrol stations, convenience or discount stores
- Treatments that are used to treat a condition that is considered to be self-limiting and so does not need treatment as it will heal/resolve by itself; and/or
- Treatments that are used to treat a condition which lends itself to self-care, i.e. that the person suffering does not normally need to seek medical care and/or treatment for the condition.
- Treatments available OTC which should no longer be prescribed in SW London are listed below.

To read more on how prescribing of over the counter medicines is changing:  
[click here to see NHS patient leaflets](#). These leaflets have been produced to help CCGs implement recommendations and support discussions between patients and their healthcare professionals .