

## Insect and Tick Allergy - Fast Facts

This document has been developed by [ASCIA](#), the peak professional body of clinical immunology/allergy specialists in Australia and New Zealand. ASCIA information is based on published literature and expert review, is not influenced by commercial organisations and is not intended to replace medical advice. For patient or carer support contact [Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia](#) or [Allergy New Zealand](#).

1. Allergies to stinging insect venoms are one of the most common causes of severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) in Australia and New Zealand.
2. Anaphylaxis to stinging insects (such as bees, wasps, or Jack Jumper Ants), result in an average of three deaths per year. Insect bites are a less common cause of anaphylaxis than insect stings.
3. Most allergic reactions to insect stings or bites result in mild or moderate symptoms. These include local itch and swellings that can be large and uncomfortable. However, they usually settle within a few days.
4. Ticks also cause allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis. Ticks are mainly located in coastal regions of mid-Eastern Australia. To prevent allergic reactions to tick bites, seek medical help or freeze tick and let it drop off.
5. Signs of anaphylaxis to venom include an all over body rash, difficult or noisy breathing, swelling of tongue, swelling or tightness in throat, wheeze or persistent cough, difficulty talking or hoarse voice, persistent dizziness or collapse, abdominal (stomach) pain or vomiting. Young children may be pale and floppy.
6. People at risk of anaphylaxis to venom are usually advised to seek urgent medical help if stung or bitten, and to have their adrenaline (epinephrine) injector/s readily available to treat anaphylaxis. They should also be referred to a clinical immunology/allergy specialist for further tests and treatment.
7. Bites and stings can be avoided in many cases by taking precautions. These may include covering skin with long sleeves, long pants and gloves if gardening, wearing shoes when outdoors, not provoking bees and wasps, having insect nests removed by professionals, and driving with the windows up where possible.
8. Allergy testing, such as skin prick tests or blood tests, may be ordered by your doctor to help confirm or exclude insect allergy. This can guide treatment and prevention measures.
9. Venom immunotherapy (VIT), also known as desensitisation, is an effective treatment for severe allergies to bee and wasp stings. The treatment usually takes three to five years, and rebates are available in Australia and New Zealand. Allergen immunotherapy is also available for Jack Jumper Ant (in limited specialised centres) but is not yet available for treating allergic reactions triggered by ticks or other species of ants.
10. To initiate venom immunotherapy, referral to a clinical immunology/allergy specialist is recommended, as listed on the ASCIA website [www.allergy.org.au/patients/locate-a-specialist](http://www.allergy.org.au/patients/locate-a-specialist)

© ASCIA 2023

Content updated June 2023

For more information go to [www.allergy.org.au/patients/insect-allergy-bites-and-stings](http://www.allergy.org.au/patients/insect-allergy-bites-and-stings)

To support allergy and immunology research go to [www.allergyimmunology.org.au/donate](http://www.allergyimmunology.org.au/donate)