

**Q.** Last summer my son was stung by a bee that led to swelling and a horrible allergic reaction. I'm afraid that the same thing will happen this year but I can't lock him up in the house all summer. Do you have any suggestions?

**A.** As the weather gets warmer we will encounter many insects. Here are some to keep away from! Many bugs give us reason for pause, including poisonous spiders, chiggers, bees and lice. But few get under our skin – quite literally – like the tick.

## TICKS

Be careful of ticks — they can cling to you as you brush past grass and plants. Ticks don't always carry diseases, and most bites are not serious. But they can carry diseases such as the Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. To prevent tick bites, keep your arms, legs, and head covered when outdoors. Use tick repellant with DEET but **not** on children under 2 years old. Check for ticks after spending time in grassy or wooded areas. You don't usually need to test your child or the tick and your child doesn't need antibiotics after a tick bite. Instead, you should just watch the child for symptoms, especially a rash developing at the site of the tick bite and/or a fever. Saving the tick in a container might be helpful though. Other things to keep in mind:

- tick infections, except Rocky Mountain spotted fever, are usually not transmitted from dog ticks, which are larger than the deer ticks that carry many of these infections. Dogs and other pets can carry deer ticks though.
- ticks are most likely to transmit infection after feeding for two or more days, so you can greatly reduce your child's risk of infection by doing daily tick checks, especially when

your child is outdoors a lot, such as when hiking or camping, in high risk areas.

- there is usually a seasonal pattern to tick infections, such as Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever which are most common during the late spring and summer months in the United States.

The symptoms of tick infections depend on what bacteria the tick carry. The most commonly recognized symptom is usually a rash, which can look like:

- the classic "bull's-eye" rash, erythema migrans, that occurs with **Lyme disease**
- a similar red, expanding rash with central clearing following the bite of the lone star tick in the southeast or south central United States, causing Southern tick-associated rash illness (STARI).
- the more subtle rash with small, flat, pink, non-itchy spots (macules) on the wrists, forearms, and ankles that children with **Rocky Mountain spotted fever** can get

## **SPIDERS**

Wood piles and tree stumps — that's where poisonous female **Black Widow Spiders** hide. Black widow spider bites may cause sharp, shooting pain up the limb, but they can also be painless. Severe muscle cramps, nausea, vomiting, seizure, and a rise in blood pressure may follow soon after. Get medical care immediately. Anti-venom medicine is available. Most bites occur in rural and suburban areas and occur between the months of April and October. These spiders tend to bite defensively when their webs are disturbed. Bites to babies and children may be more serious than bites to adults.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of a black widow spider bite?**

In most cases of a black widow spider bite, symptoms consist only of:

\* Minimal to sharp pain followed by swelling and redness at the site of the bite.  
or two small fang marks like tiny red spots.

\* One

In some cases, severe symptoms appear within 30 to 60 minutes. These include:

\* Muscle cramps and spasms that start near the bite and then spread and increase in severity for 6 to 12 hours.  
nausea, or vomiting.

\* Chills, fever,  
\*Sweating.  
\*Severe abdominal, back, or chest  
\*Headache.  
\*Stupor, restlessness, or shock.  
\*Severely high blood pressure.

## **FLEAS**

Fleas are small, wingless, agile insects that live off the blood of their host – and they don't just bite pets. They dine on people, too. The best solution is to get rid of fleas on pets and in your home. Keep pets out of your bed and be sure to vacuum rugs daily. Spray insecticides on infested areas. Consider using a once-a-month insecticide on your pet. Flea bites usually cause only mild symptoms in humans that can be relieved by home treatment measures, such as nonprescription [cortisone](#) cream.

Signs and symptoms of flea bites may include:

- Zigzag lines, especially on the [feet](#) and legs and in the waist areas.
- Intense [itching](#) .
- A single hive or wheal.
- Dull red spots that last even after other symptoms disappear.
- Blisters or open sores in highly sensitive people.

Adult fleas may live in floor crevices, debris, and carpeting for years and can survive for months without feeding. In rare cases, they can carry disease, such as plague.

## WASP, HORNETS, BEES and YELLOW JACKETS

When a bee stings it loses the stinger and dies. But a wasp, hornet, or yellow jacket can inflict multiple stings because they do not lose their stingers. These stings can cause serious reactions in children who are allergic to them. What to do? Apply ice, take oral antihistamine for itching, and take ibuprofen or acetaminophen for pain relief. If there is a severe anaphylactic reaction, lie down and carefully remove the stinger. Use an EpiPen (epinephrine) if you have one. Get **immediate** medical care.

### Examples of problems that are more serious include:

A severe allergic reaction or [anaphylaxis](#) : Severe allergic reactions are not common but can be life-threatening and require emergency care. Signs or symptoms may include:

- \* [Shock](#) , which may occur if the circulatory system cannot get enough blood to the vital organs.

- \*Coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing, or feeling of fullness in the mouth or throat

- \*Swelling of the lips, tongue, ears, eyelids, palms of the hands, soles of the feet, and mucous membranes (angioedema). \*

- [Lightheadedness](#)

- and

- [confusion](#)

- . \*Nausea, diarrhea, and stomach \*

- cramps.

- [Hives](#)

- and reddening of the skin. These symptoms often occur with other symptoms of a severe reaction.

## SCABIES MITES

When **Scabies** mites get into the skin, they can cause a big skin problem. The mites spread through skin-to-skin contact with an infected person — or by sharing towels, bed linens, and other objects. Intense itching and skin sores don't appear until several weeks after mites get into skin. The itching is very severe and usually worse at night. Yes, scabies is still around!

## **BED BUGS**

Their name tells the tale, as these tiny insects tend to hide in bedding. They are often found in hotels, shelters, and apartment complexes — and can hitch a ride into your home aboard luggage, pets, and boxes. Bedbugs leave itchy, red bites on the skin, usually on the arms or shoulders. More of a nuisance than a health hazard, it is possible to develop an infection from scratching.

## **MOSQUITOES**

Mosquitoes are just annoying. Scratching a bite can cause a skin infection too. Also, mosquitoes can carry West Nile virus, dengue fever, and other diseases. To protect yourself from mosquitoes, apply insect repellent and cover up when you go outdoors. Use window screens, and get rid of standing water in your yard.

## **Other Pests!**

Not a biter but pretty dirty is the **House Fly!** A housefly is a dirty insect — carrying more than 1 million bacteria on its body. It can spread intestinal infections by contaminating food. To control flies, keep food and garbage in closed containers and use window screens on your home.

### **Cockroaches**

are not just ugly. Cockroaches carry diseases like salmonella. When they die, the carcasses trigger allergic reactions and asthma. It helps to use pesticides, keep a clean kitchen, and

repair cracks and holes in floors and walls.

**Chiggers**

are tiny mites that live in areas with grass or brush. Chiggers, also known as red bugs or harvest mites, usually cannot be seen without a magnifying glass. Chiggers attach to skin pores and feed on skin cells for a few days, most often in the warm creases of the body. In the United States chiggers do not cause any diseases. Don't forget

**Lice**

, too!

1. Use insecticides while children are not at home and make sure to clean bedding, dishes and handles after so that children are not exposed to the chemicals.
2. Keep Benadryl and Benadryl ointment and pain killers in your home.
3. Check out your home and the perimeter of your home for bee hives, wasp nests, and standing water and remove them.
4. Dress your son in long pants and socks and use sun block and bug sprays when he is playing outside!
5. Wear light colored clothing, so as not to attract bugs.
6. Avoid using any scented soaps or other products on your baby, since the fragrances can also attract insects.
7. Common insect repellents that can be safely used on children include those with **less** than 10% DEET, or others with citronella or soybean oil.
8. Apply insect repellents to clothing instead of skin so that it won't be absorbed.
9. Wash off insect repellents as soon as possible.
10. Avoid areas where insects nest.
11. Remember that insect repellents do not protect against most stinging insects, including wasps, bees and fire ants.
12. Use window and door screens to prevent insects from getting inside your house.

Visit [www.WebMD.com](http://www.WebMD.com) , <http://pediatrics.about.com/cs/safetyfirstaid> , for more information.

**Good**

**luck and be Careful!**

Lisa-Anne Ray-Byers is a certified and licensed speech-language pathologist who has worked in education for over two decades. She holds graduate degrees in speech-language pathology and multicultural education. She also holds certification in educational administration. She is the education editor for the Community Journal newspaper in Hempstead, New York. She is also the author of the book, ***They Say I Have ADHD, I Say Life Sucks! Thoughts From Nicholas*** available at

[www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)

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You can contact her at

[speechlrb@yahoo.com](mailto:speechlrb@yahoo.com)

or by visiting her website at  
[www.AskLisaAnne.com](http://www.AskLisaAnne.com).