

AI-04494 Bee Sting First Aid

First aid bee sting, do nothing? The are of concern is swelling a little bit.

Short answer: don't just do nothing — take a few simple, active steps right now. While a bit of local swelling is a totally normal reaction to a bee sting, treating it early keeps the pain down and prevents the swelling from spreading as much.

Here is the step-by-step first aid process to follow right away:

1. Remove the Stinger Immediately

If the sting was from a honeybee, the stinger and venom sac are likely still stuck in the skin.

- **How to do it:** Scrape it off horizontally using a fingernail, the edge of a credit card, or a dull knife.
- **What to avoid:** Don't squeeze the stinger with tweezers or your fingers — squeezing pumps more venom into the tissue.

2. Clean the Area

Wash the sting site thoroughly with basic soap and water. This removes surface venom and lowers the risk of a secondary skin infection.

3. Control the Swelling & Pain

- **Ice it:** Apply an ice pack wrapped in a cloth (never direct ice on skin) for **10–20 minutes at a time**. Cold constricts local blood vessels and is the single best way to slow down swelling and numb the pain.
- **Elevate:** If the sting is on an arm or leg, keeping it elevated above heart level helps fluid drain away from the site.
- **Over-the-counter relief:** An oral antihistamine (like diphenhydramine/Benadryl or cetirizine/Zyrtec) can help reduce localized swelling and itching. Hydrocortisone cream (1%) applied topically also eases irritation.

When Local Swelling Needs Attention vs. Emergency Care

A normal reaction involves local redness, mild swelling, and heat right around the sting (often expanding up to a few inches over 24–48 hours before fading).

Watch for Signs of Anaphylaxis (Systemic Allergic Reaction)

Seek emergency medical care (call 911 or go to an ER) immediately if any of these develop:

- Difficulty breathing, wheezing, or tightness in the chest

- Swelling of the tongue, lips, throat, or face (away from the sting site)
- Dizziness, lightheadedness, or feeling faint
- Hives or a red rash spreading across areas away from the sting
- Nausea, vomiting, or severe abdominal cramps