Fire Ant Bites

A fire ant bite(s) appears as a red lump in the skin. It sometimes has a tiny hole in the center. Reactions to these bites can be severe. A severe reaction is called an anaphylactic reaction. With a severe reaction there may be symptoms of wheezing or difficulty breathing, chest pain, fainting and raised red patches on the skin (*hives*) that itch. There may also be nausea (feeling sick to your stomach), vomiting, cramping or diarrhea. Usually after twenty four hours a small sterile *pustule* (a tiny sac in the skin filled with pus but no germs) develops. There may be itching, burning and redness.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Apply a cold compress for 10 to 20 minutes every hour for one to two days. This will reduce swelling and itching.
- After 24 to 48 hours, a warm compress may be soothing and will help decrease swelling.
- To relieve itching and swelling, you may use:
  - Diphenhydramine (Benadryl®), available over the counter. Take medication as directed. DO NOT DRINK ALCOHOL OR DRIVE WHILE TAKING THIS MEDICATION.
  - Hydrocortisone cream may be applied lightly four times per day for a couple days or as directed.
  - Calamine lotion with diphenhydramine may be used lightly on the bite four times per day for itching or as directed. *Do not take with oral diphenhydramine (Benadryl®).*
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- None of the above helps within 2 to 3 days.
- The area becomes red, warm, tender, and swollen beyond the area of the bite or sting.
- An oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C) develops, or as your caregiver suggests, not controlled by medicine.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have symptoms of an allergic reaction (wheezing or difficulty breathing).
- You develop chest pain, fainting, raised red patches on the skin that itch.
- You develop nausea, vomiting, cramping or diarrhea.
- **These may be early signs of a serious generalized or anaphylactic reaction.**

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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