

Venom Testing and Shots

Summer's here and that means bees and stinging insects are out. If you're planning to spend any time outside, knowing your allergies could mean the difference between life and death. Venom shots work to desensitize you to the allergy trigger.

What is venom testing?



- A test where your body is exposed to reduced levels of bee and stinging insect venom
- It gives you an idea to which venoms you are allergic, if any
- It can take as little as half an hour or as much as half a day depending on the severity of reactions
- Could ultimately save your life by making you aware of a dangerous allergy

How is venom testing done?

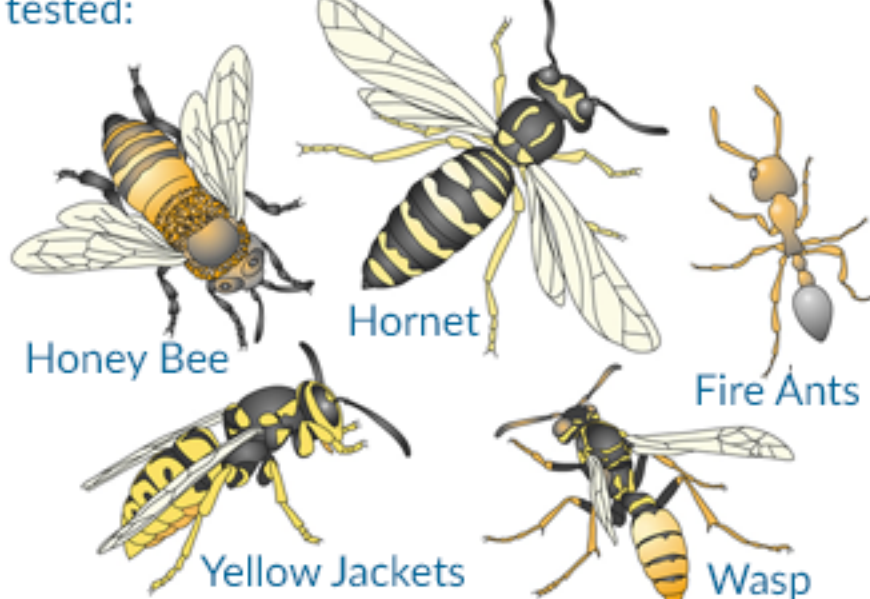
- 1 An applicator is used to prick your skin with a very small amount of the insect venom.
- 2 The site is monitored for 15-20 minutes to see if any redness, itchiness or hives develop.
- 3 If not, a secondary, intradermal test may be given.
- 4 In an intradermal test, the venom is injected under your skin and the area is monitored.



What venoms are tested?

Illustration credit:
Hymenoptera Venom Allergy
Velma L. Paschall
www.clevelandclinicmeded.com

Depending on where you live, it may vary. Typically the following insect venoms are tested:



...and White faced hornets

Should I get venom tested?



If you were stung by an insect and had hives, swelling, dizziness, feeling faint or any other symptoms speak to your doctor. You may have a minor or a serious reaction to a stinging insect. The best course of action would be to talk with your allergist and possibly be tested if warranted.

Venom shots



Venom shots work to desensitize your body to a specific venom to which you know you are allergic. The venom is injected in a diluted dose. With each venom shot slightly more venom is given in a controlled, incremental dose until symptoms are no longer present at normal exposure levels.

How long does it take?

- Venom shots are given in two phases.
- The 1st phase or **Buildup Phase** takes about 6 - 9 months of weekly or bi-weekly shots.
- The 2nd phase or **Maintenance Phase** can continue on for a year or more, and involves less-frequent shots every 2 - 4 months.

Like other allergy shots (immunotherapy), venom shots are highly effective. Patients will see positive results 98% of the time.

In the rare instance that venom shots aren't effective at reducing or eliminating allergic reactions to venom, your allergy and asthma specialist will discontinue the treatment and discuss other ways to treat or minimize reactions.

Should I get venom shots?

If you have a confirmed allergy the best course of action would be to pursue venom immunotherapy. It's a highly effective therapy that can prevent a life-threatening allergic reaction in case of a bite or sting.



At Allergy & Asthma Associates S.C., we're committed to everybody enjoying all that the Fox Valley has to offer during the summer. If worry over an allergic reaction to a bite or a sting is keeping you from enjoying our beautiful Wisconsin summer, **contact us today.**