

Scorpion Stings

Barbara Brillhart RN PhD FNP-BC



Scorpion sting reactions vary in severity as the size of the scorpion and the amount of poison injected. Scorpions are found in Arizona, New Mexico, and near the Colorado River. Scorpions found in these areas can be considered a serious risk. Scorpions raise their tails and sting with a poisoned hook on this tail. This article will contain the symptoms of scorpion stings, treatment of the stings, and tips on how to avoid scorpions.

Scorpion stings are characterized by immediate sharp, pain without redness or swelling. Serious symptoms then occur approximately one hour after being stung and maximize in five hours.

There are four grades of scorpion stings.

Grade I scorpion sting has localized sharp, burning pain, swelling, and numbness or tingling at the sting site.

Grade II scorpion sting has sharp, burning pain, swelling, numbness, and tingling at the sting site and expanding beyond the sting site.

Grade III scorpion sting has dysfunction of the nerves or muscles, blurred vision, wandering eye movements, excessive saliva, difficult swallowing, upper air way obstruction, slurred speech, jerking of the arms, restlessness, arching of the back, shaking, jerking and convulsions.

Grade IV scorpion sting has dysfunction of both the nerves and muscles with a combination of Grade III symptoms.

Other symptoms of the scorpion sting includes: swelling at the sting site, high blood pressure, nausea, vomiting, elevate temperature, fast heart rate, fast breathing and/or problems with breathing. Younger children less then 10 years of age have more serious symptoms as compared to older children and adults. Older children and adults usually recover within 10 to 24 hours following the sting. Fewer than 1 percent of adults die from a scorpion sting, however, 25 percent of young children under five years of age die from the scorpion sting if not treated. People die from scorpion stings due to heart or respiratory failure.

Treatment for a scorpion sting is as follows:

- **Wash the area with cold water.**
- **Remove jewelry as the hand swells.**
- **Elevate the stung bite of the arm or leg to the level of the heart.**
- **Apply an ointment of antihistamine or corticosteroid and a pain reliever.**
- **Apply ice to the sting which reduces swelling and pain.**
- **Take a dose of antihistamine (as Benadryl) and pain reliever (as Tylenol).**
- **Go to the emergency room for care by a health care professional. The person may require anti-venom. There is anti-venom for the “Bark Scorpion” which is common to the Southwest portion of the United States.**

Scorpions are active at night and often hide in cracks and undergrowth. They are also seen during daytimes. The best tip to avoid the scorpion stings is to avoid the scorpion and by not picking it up.