

# Summer Skin Conditions: Most Common Bites, Rashes and Stings

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Summer means more time spent in the great outdoors. And while the fresh air and vitamin D are good for the body, mind and spirit, enjoying nature does come with a few risks, such as insect bites, poisonous plants, stings and sunburn or heat rash.

These summer skin conditions can put a damper on your outdoor activities. Learn how to avoid and treat the most common ones.

### Bug Bites and Stings

Insect bites and stings, such as those from ants, bees, fleas and mosquitoes, are usually harmless. You may have some itching, swelling or pain caused by your body's natural reaction to the venom the insect injected into your skin. In rare cases, bites or stings may cause an allergic reaction or more serious illness such as Lyme disease or West Nile virus.

You can protect yourself from the discomfort and danger of bites and stings in the following ways:

- Avoid disturbing insects and their homes
- Wear bug repellent or burn citronella candles to keep insects away
- Wear long-sleeves, long pants and closed-toe shoes when exploring the woods or other areas with a high concentration of insects

If you are bit or stung, wash the area with soap and water and apply ice to reduce the swelling. A topical pain reliever, oral antihistamine or anti-itch cream may also help. If you have a serious allergic reaction, including vomiting, trouble breathing or swelling of the tongue or throat, get emergency medical help.

### Poisonous Plants

Not everyone is allergic to the oil found in poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac, but most people will develop a red, itchy rash after coming into contact with the plants. You're most likely to encounter these plants in wooded areas where the oil can attach to your skin, clothing or shoes and then spread easily to other areas.

Signs of a rash will develop within a few days of exposure and may last for several weeks. The best way to avoid a reaction is to be on the lookout for the poisonous plants and avoid them. If you think you may have come in contact with one, wash your skin, clothes and shoes immediately and thoroughly.

If you do develop a skin rash from a poisonous plant, see your doctor for a prescription strength topical steroid. If you have a severe reaction, you may need an oral steroid or a steroid shot to help clear up your symptoms.

### Sunburn and Heat Rash

Warm sunshine is one of the best parts of summer weather, however it can cause problems for your skin. Sunburn causes red, painful skin that may itch or form blisters. Heat rash happens when the ducts that carry sweat to the opening of your skin become blocked and itchy bumps develop.

You can protect your skin from sunburn and heat rash by:

- Staying indoors during peak sun hours (10 am to 2 pm)
- Staying in the shade when possible
- Wearing a broad-spectrum sunscreen (with an SPF of at least 30)
- Wearing loose fitting clothing to keep your skin dry and cool

If you do get sunburn, aloe can help soothe your skin. For heat rash, use cool compresses or an over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream to calm your skin down.

### When to Call the Doctor

Contact your doctor if you have a rash, bite or sting that gets worse or prevents you from relaxing, sleeping or performing daily activities. Most rashes should only last for a few days. If yours lasts longer or if you develop a fever, Centra Care's experienced providers can help.

Get immediate medical attention if you develop any signs of an allergic reaction, such as vomiting, severe swelling or trouble breathing or swallowing.

### Don't Let Summer Skin Conditions Slow You Down

Protecting your skin can mean the difference between a healthy summer glow and itchy, painful rashes. Know what to avoid and take every precaution so you can enjoy every minute.

If you do find yourself needing some TLC for a bite, sting or burn, turn to us. Find your neighborhood [Centra Care location](#).

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