

WORST-CASE SCENARIO®

HOW TO ESCAPE FROM FIRE ANTS

1 **Brush the ants off.**

Fire ants inject venom from a stinger connected to a poison gland. A single ant will pinch the skin with its jaws and sting numerous times, injecting more venom with each sting. As the venom enters the skin, you will experience the intense, burning sensation that gives fire ants their name. Using your hand or a cloth, make a fast, sharp, brushing motion until their jaws dislodge from the skin and they fall off. Jumping up and down, shaking the affected area, and placing the ants under running water will not prevent the ants from attacking and may cause further injury.

2 **Run from the area.**

As you remove the ants, flee the area of the attack. When a mound or nest is disturbed, or foraging fire ants are encountered, they immediately climb up any vertical surface and sting. Hundreds of ants may attack within seconds, especially in mild to high temperatures, when ants stay closer to the surface. The ants will continue to attack even after you have left the nest area, however. Continue brushing them as you run.

3 **Remove your clothing.**

Fire ants will stay in the creases of clothing and may sting later. Once you have reached safety and removed

all visible ants, take off your shoes, socks, pants, and any other articles of clothing where the ants were visible. Inspect your clothes carefully, especially the pockets and seams, before putting them back on. If possible, launder the items before wearing them again.

4 **Treat the affected area.**

After several minutes, the site of each bite will redden and swell into a bump. A topical antihistamine may relieve some itching at bite sites. Several hours to several days later, the bumps will become white, fluid-filled pustules, which will last for several days or, in some cases, weeks. Immediately upon the appearance of pustules, treat the affected areas with a solution of half bleach, half water to lessen pain and reduce itching. Use an over-the-counter pain medication to reduce discomfort. Pustules will form regardless of topical treatment. If pustules break, treat with a topical antibacterial ointment to prevent infection. Pustules may leave scars.

5 **Monitor symptoms.**

Even a healthy adult may have a severe reaction to hundreds of stings, and people with certain allergies may develop serious complications. Watch for severe chest pain, nausea, severe sweating, loss of breath, severe swelling of limbs, and slurred speech. Seek immediate medical attention if any of these symptoms are present. In highly allergic people, anaphylaxis may occur from fire ant stings. Administer epinephrine immediately.

**WORST-CASE
SCENARIO®**