

<b>TARIKH</b>	ISNIN, 7 OKTOBER 2024
<b>AKHBAR</b>	THE STAR
<b>TAJUK ARTIKEL</b>	WHAT IS VENOM IMMUNOTHERAPY?
<b>M/S</b>	9
<b>BIDANG</b>	SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
<b>KATA KUNCI</b>	VENOM IMMUNOTHERAPY

BZZZZZZZ ... uh-oh!

If you're allergic to the venom of bees or wasps, hearing them buzzing nearby can be scary, and maybe even make you panic.

After all, a sting could, at worst, cause a severe, life-threatening overreaction of your immune system.

Called anaphylaxis or anaphylactic shock, its symptoms include difficulty breathing, a rapid heart rate, sudden drop in blood pressure and loss of consciousness.

Many people aware of their allergy arm themselves against winged insects by keeping an emergency kit at hand that contains an adrenaline (epinephrine) auto-injector.

Injected into the thigh, adrenaline reduces the body's allergic response.

Being thus forearmed may do little to allay their fear though.

But as the German Dermatological Society (DDG)

## What is venom immunotherapy?



For anyone with an insect venom allergy, there is a therapy that gets to the root of the problem, but it requires patience. – dpa

points out, there's a way to treat the cause of the problem and not merely the symptoms: venom immunotherapy.

How does it work?

An allergist regularly injects small doses of the venom you're allergic to under your skin, grad-

ually increasing the amount, in order to desensitise your immune system to the allergen so that it no longer overreacts.

The therapy takes three to five years to complete, the DDG says, and it's important to stick to the schedule.

Injections are given once a week at first, then every four to eight weeks.

Besides allergists, doctors qualified to administer them include dermatologists, ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialists, general practitioners (GPs) and paediatricians with additional training in allergology.

Undergoing the full course of therapy is highly effective.

The DDG estimates that it prevents 90% of anaphylactic shocks caused by insect venom.

Venom immunotherapy isn't

for everyone who has an allergic reaction to insect bites or stings though.

Medical guidelines recommend it for those with at least stage two anaphylaxis (also known as "moderate" anaphylaxis; there are four stages in all).

In addition to stage one symptoms – i.e. skin rash or redness, itching and hives – stage two is characterised by nausea, circulatory problems, difficulty swallowing and/or breathing.

Sometimes, however, the therapy is a good idea in stage one cases too, namely, for people at a higher occupational risk of insect bites or stings.

This could include people who work in a bakery or garden centre for instance.

According to the DDG, swelling of up to 10 centimetres around a bee or wasp sting is normal.

But if it's much larger or lasts longer than 24 hours, you should see a doctor. – dpa

**DISEDIAKAN  
OLEH**

**1-PN NOR SURIANI BINTI MOHD ZIN (S44), BPM**