Getting to know ...
Insect Bites

When we sustain a painful bite by an unidentified insect, 2 questions naturally come to mind: "What is this?" followed by "Is it life threatening?"

Insects bite for survival, either because they need to feed or as a defence mechanism.

The mechanism takes one of three forms:
1. They pierce and suck your blood through a proboscis, which is their mouth part,
2. They sting by injecting a venom from the tip of their abdomen, or
3. They use the mandibles attached to their head to scissor-cut, thus inflicting pain and sometimes resulting in blood oozing out.

To help in the identification of the source of the bite, you should observe the environment (e.g presence of other animals or nesting), any smell, physical presence of the pest and the bite marks (e.g. shape, pattern, puncture point or colour).

Here are 5 insect bites that we should avoid getting.

1 Mosquito Bites

This is the No. 1 vector-borne killer in Singapore, with dengue as the most common disease.

In January, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warned pregnant women from traveling to 14 countries in the Caribbean and Latin America, where infection with Zika, a disease borne by the Aedes species mosquitoes, is a risk. Zika, although not detected in Singapore, yet, is linked to serious birth defects affecting the brain.

The classic example of an insect biting for food is the female mosquito. The protein in the blood is needed for its egg formation. However, both the female and male mosquito feed on plant nectar for its food.

For most of us the mosquito bite will disappear within a day. It needs to bite a dengue or malaria victim before it bites you, in order to transmit the disease.

2 Hornet Bites

Hornets (or Social Wasps) are well known for injecting venom as a defence mechanism. Depending on your level of tolerance and the number of bites received, death can occur. Their sting is a little red dot in the middle of a mound.

A hornet's sting is sharp like a needle and it will continuously inject venom until it is exhausted.