



YCPARMIA

Snake Bites

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Each year, nearly 8,000 people receive poisonous snake bites in the United States. Even a bite from a so-called "harmless" snake can cause infection or allergic reaction in some people. People who frequently visit wilderness areas, camp, hike, picnic, or live in snake-inhabited areas should be aware of the potential dangers posed by venomous snakes.

Any of the following snakes can cause poisonous bites:

- Rattlesnake
- Copperhead
- Cottonmouth Water Moccasin
- Coral Snake



While each individual may experience symptoms differently, the following are the most common symptoms of poisonous snake bites:

- bloody wound discharge
- fang marks in the skin and swelling at the site of the bite
- severe localized pain
- diarrhea
- burning
- convulsions
- fainting
- dizziness
- weakness
- blurred vision
- excessive sweating
- fever
- increased thirst
- loss of muscle coordination
- nausea and vomiting
- numbness and tingling
- rapid pulse

Treatment for snake bite

Call for emergency assistance immediately if someone has been bitten by a snake. Responding quickly in this type of emergency is crucial. While waiting for emergency assistance:

- Wash the bite with soap and water.

- Immobilize the bitten area and keep it lower than the heart.
- Cover the area with a clean, cool compress or a moist dressing to minimize swelling and discomfort.
- Monitor vital signs.

If a victim is unable to reach medical care within 30 minutes, the American Red Cross recommends:

- Apply a bandage, wrapped two to four inches above the bite, to help slow the venom. This should not cut off the flow of blood from a vein or artery - the band should be loose enough to slip a finger under it.
- **DO NOT** apply ice, apply suction, apply a tourniquet, or use electric shock, ever.

Most often, physicians use antivenin -- an antidote to snake venom -- to treat serious snake bites. Antivenin is derived from antibodies created in a horse's blood serum when the animal is injected with snake venom. Because antivenin is obtained from horses, snake bite victims sensitive to horse products must be carefully managed.

Preventing snake bites:

Some bites, such as those inflicted when you accidentally step on a snake in the woods, are nearly impossible to prevent. However, there are precautions that can reduce your chances of being bitten by a snake. These include:

- Leave snakes alone. Many people are bitten because they try to kill a snake or get too close to it.
- Stay out of tall grass unless you wear thick leather boots and remain on hiking paths as much as possible.
- Keep hands and feet out of areas you cannot see. Do not pick up rocks or firewood unless you are out of a snake's striking distance.
- Be cautious and alert when climbing rocks.