

# RATTLESNAKE BITES

Based on the information by Edwin Quintero presented I put this together for you to save in case of emergency. Some of this info was taken directly from the National Institute of Health....Nedra Denison

## IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO!

1. **CALL 911 OR TAKE THE PERSON IMMEDIATELY TO THE CLOSEST HOSPITAL (Info listed below)**
2. **If at all possible take a photo of the snake so the ER can identify the snake to determine if it is venomous & which antivenom is necessary.** (Keep in mind that antivenom is very expensive so this is important)
3. The right antivenom can save a person's life. Getting to an emergency room as quickly as possible is very important. If properly treated, many snake bites will not have serious effects.
4. **Draw a circle around the bite site. Once swelling starts they may not be able to determine where the bite was.**
5. Snake bites can be deadly if not treated quickly. Children are at higher risk for death or serious complications due to snake bites because of their smaller body size.

## WHERE TO SEEK EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT ASAP

The following Medical Centers have antivenom available in their ER & can treat you. **If possible call ahead so they can have the antivenom ready when you arrive.** The Emergency department phone numbers are listed below. **GO TO THE CLOSEST MEDICAL CENTER!**

- **MISSION REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER ER: 956-323-1111**– They stock antivenom & if extra dosing is needed they taxi it over from another facility.
- **MCALLEN MEDICAL CENTER ER: 956-632-4101** – They stock antivenom & if extra dosing is needed it is obtained from other facilities. NOTE: They no longer have a plastic surgeon on call to treat hand bites.

## First Aid

1. **Keep the person calm. Reassure them that bites can be effectively treated in an emergency room. Anxiety will only spread the flow of venom faster. Restrict movement, and keep the affected area below heart level to reduce the flow of venom.**
2. If you have a pump suction device (such as that made by Sawyer), follow the manufacturer's directions.
3. Remove any rings or constricting items, because the affected area may swell. Create a loose splint to help restrict movement of the area.
4. If the area of the bite begins to swell and change color, the snake was probably venomous.
5. Monitor the person's vital signs: temperature, pulse, rate of breathing, and blood pressure -- if possible. If there are signs of shock (such as paleness), lay the person flat, raise the feet about a foot, and cover the person with a blanket.
6. **Get medical help right away.**

**7. Bring in the dead snake only if this can be done safely. Do not waste time hunting for the snake, and do not risk another bite if it is not easy to kill the snake. Be careful of the head when transporting it -- a snake can actually bite for several hours after it's dead (from a reflex).**

## **DO NOT**

- Do NOT allow the person to become over-exerted. If necessary, carry the person to safety.
- Do NOT apply a tourniquet.
- Do NOT apply cold compresses to a snake bite.
- Do NOT cut into a snake bite with a knife or razor.
- Do NOT try to suck out the venom by mouth.
- Do NOT give the person stimulants or pain medications unless a doctor tells you to do so.
- Do NOT give the person anything by mouth.
- Do NOT raise the site of the bite above the level of the person's heart.

**Rattlesnake bites** are painful when they occur. Symptoms usually begin right away and may include:

- Bleeding
- Breathing difficulty
- Blurred vision
- Eyelid drooping
- Low blood pressure
- Nausea and vomiting
- Numbness
- Pain at site of bite
- Paralysis
- Rapid pulse
- Skin color changes
- Swelling
- Tingling
- Tissue damage
- Thirst
- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Weak pulse

## **References**

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