



Snake Bites

As a reminder, with the warmer weather, snakes are out and about.

Most North American snakes are not poisonous. Some exceptions include the rattlesnake, coral snake, water moccasin and copperhead. Their bites can be life-threatening. Of the poisonous snakes found in North America, all but the coral snake have slit-like eyes. Their heads are triangular, with a depression, or pit, midway between the eyes and the nostrils. Other characteristics are unique to certain poisonous snakes:

- Rattlesnakes rattle by shaking the rings at the end of their tails
- Water moccasins' mouths have a white, cottony lining
- Coral snakes have red, yellow and black rings along the length of their bodies



To reduce your risk of snake bite, avoid touching any snake. Instead, back away slowly. Most snakes avoid people if possible and bite only when threatened or surprised. Always keep your eyes open and be careful where you step or put your hands. If a snake bites you:

- Call 911 and seek immediate medical attention, especially if the area changes color, begins to swell or is painful
- Remain calm
- Immobilize the bitten arm or leg and stay as quiet as possible to keep the poison from spreading through your body
- Remove jewelry before you start to swell
- Position yourself, if possible, so that the bite is at or below the level of your heart
- Cleanse the wound, but don't flush it with water and cover it with a clean, dry dressing



- Apply a splint to reduce movement of the affected area, but keep it loose enough so as not to restrict blood flow
- Don't use a tourniquet or apply ice
- Don't cut the wound or attempt to remove the venom
- Don't drink caffeine or alcohol
- Don't try to capture the snake, but try to remember its color and shape so you can describe it, which will help in your treatment

Remember: "No task is so important that it be done at the risk of safety."