

Snakebite Facts



Snakes are an integral part of every natural ecosystem in which they are found. **THEY FILL THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF BEING BOTH PREDATOR AND PREY AND ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF NATURE'S BALANCE.**

Killing such a predator causes a spike in prey population.

Most of the people associate snakes with venomous bite but the danger of bite is usually exaggerated. The truth is **ONLY A SMALL FRACTION OF SNAKE SPECIES PRODUCE VENOM TO IMMOBILIZE PREY OR FOR DEFENSE.**

Snakes will not **BITE HUMANS UNLESS THEY FEEL THREATENED**, so leaving them alone is the best strategy for preventing a bite.

According to recent studies, **SNAKE VENOM CAN BE HELPFUL TO CURE SERIOUS AND LIFE-THREATENING DISEASES LIKE CANCER, DIABETES AND HYPERTENSION.**

THE ONLY RESPONSIBLE AND POSSIBLE SOLUTION IS LEARNING HOW TO LIVE WITH WILDLIFE SAFELY.

It is not possible to ensure we never encounter a snake, so instead of killing wildlife, learn to identify and respect these beneficial members of the ecosystem.



There are about **3150** species of snakes in the world and around **600** species are venomous.

In India, out of the about **270** species of snakes, about **60 are considered venomous.**

There only **6 most venomous snakes found in India.** Four of them called Big Four include Cobra, Common Krait, Russell's Viper and Saw-scaled Viper and other two are the most beautiful King Cobra and camouflaged Pit Viper. There are other venomous snakes also which are variedly distributed throughout the country.

Snakes can control the amount of venom they inject through bite. They tend to reserve to help them capture their food. About **40%** snakebites received by humans are "dry".

The majority of snakes (as many as **85%** of snakes) are not poisonous if they bite. If you are bitten by a nonvenomous snake, you will recover. **Even a**

venomous bite, to be fatal, depends on many factors like the size of the snake, whether the bite could be completed, whether it was a dry bite or not, the age, physique and affected limb of the victim. **Even in the case of a full bite, with appropriate first aid, care and treatment, victim can fully recover.**

Most of the snake deaths happen due to various factors such as improper first aid, practices of faith healing, not reaching hospital on time & lack of preparedness to deal with snakebite emergencies in rural hospitals across the country. **Anti-venom, administered at the right time, is sufficient to negate the effects of the bite.**

A graphic with a red square on the left containing a white cross and a black snake silhouette. To the right, the text 'SNAKEBITE' is in a serif font, and 'FIRST AID' is in a large, bold, sans-serif font. The background is a textured, brownish-green surface.

SNAKEBITE FIRST AID

DO Keep the victim calm, restrict movement. Assure the victim there is nothing to be afraid of and do not let him panic. Panic will increase heart rate and lead to spread of venom.

DO Restrict the movement of the limb where the bite happened. This will help slow the spread of the venom.

DO Remove any jewellery around the area of the bite before swelling begins.

DO Make the victim lie flat with bitten limb below the heart level.

DO Check the area of the bite for swelling and colour change. If it changes, the snake was probably venomous.

DO Monitor the victim's vital signs such as temperature, pulse, rate of breathing and blood pressure if possible.

DO Rush to hospital and get anti-venom serum. **ANTI-VENOM SERUM IS THE ONLY REMEDY FOR VENOMOUS SNAKES.** Even if the bite isn't poisonous, it may have a risk of tetanus, a serial bacterial infection. The anti-venom serum is available at most government hospitals and public health centres. Some private hospitals also started keeping the serum and treat. Visit this link to find out some of the hospitals that treat snakebites in India. <http://www.snakebiteinitiative.in/hospitals.html>



SNAKEBITE

DO'S

DO first aid (See Pp. 3).

DO take note of the snake's appearance if possible. This will help the doctor identify what bit (location will also be a clue).

DO Note the time the bite happened so the doctor knows how much time has passed.

DO clean the wound gently with antiseptic. At the same time the bite site should not be cleaned with any solution to remove the venom.

DO Keep the contact information of nearby poison control centers readily available.

DONT'S

DO NOT use ice or any other cooling action on the bite.

DO NOT make cuts or incision in the bite site.

DO NOT burn the wound.

DO NOT use electrical shock.

DO NOT give water, any drink, food or medications. The victim should not be allowed to exert himself in any manner.

DO NOT try to capture or kill the snake. It may bite again.

DO NOT try to suck out of the venom with mouth. It doesn't work, it puts you at risk of getting poison in the mouth. A suction device should be applied over the bite.

DO NOT use aspirin, ibuprofen, or other painkillers that thin the blood.

DO NOT use electric wires, strings or tourniquet rubber. Cutting blood flow to the bite area can cause additional tissue damage.

Prevention is POSSIBLE



Make yourself familiar with both poisonous and non-poisonous snakes in the place where you live and where you visit and simply avoid any potentially dangerous snakes you may encounter.



Pay attention to where you walk. A snake likely won't bite unless you step on it.



Be alert when you roam around night. To stay alert, avoid alcohol.



Carry a walking stick to tap the ground in front of you. If a snake feels threatened, it will be more likely to attack the stick.



Wear closed shoes and long pants if you expect to be walking close to bushes, tall plants, grassy, densest forest, water bodies, rain forest and other places where snakes may live, to protect your ankles.



Always check stumps, rocks and logs before sitting down and keep tents zipped shut as much as possible.



Use a torch light at night and in dark areas so you can see snakes before you have surprise encounter.



Make sure the corridors and paths are lit up in residential areas. Cover the gaps and potential

enters of buildings that may or may be built by rats. The openings in the fine wire mesh cover drain pipe.

Snakes usually don't bite you without alarm: Cobra lifts vertically, opens hood, makes hiss; Vipers make a spiral from a tail, bend zigzag front part of the body and make a strong hiss.

If you see a snake, standing still or slowly moving away gives the snake a chance to escape harmlessly.

DO NOT try to catch or kill the snake if you happened to encounter a snake. Walk slowly away from it and keep an eye on it from a safe distance (several metres away).

If it seems to be moving towards you, stamp the ground to create ground vibrations. Most snakes are scared of humans, and this vibrations are enough to drive them away.

Call snake rescuers if you see a snake in your home or in a crowded area. Please remember to have someone watching the snake if you have to leave the area when calling the rescuers. This makes searching and capturing at their arrival easier.

Also a brief description of length, colour and body patterns when you call them can be extremely useful.

Last but not least. **CREATE AWARENESS OF SNAKEBITE AND ITS FIRST AID MANAGEMENT IN RURAL AREAS.**

Compiled and designed by Latha G. Ravikumar,
Zoo Outreach Organization.