

SNAKEBITE FIRST AID

Rattlesnake bite first aid focuses on keeping the victim calm, immobilizing the limb, and seeking immediate emergency medical care (911). Key actions include removing jewelry near the bite, cleaning the area with soap and water, and keeping the wound below heart level. **DO NOT** use tourniquets, cut the skin, or apply ice.

Get to an ER asap. Time is critical. Antivenom should be given as soon as possible. Call 9-1-1 immediately and check for these symptoms: nausea, vomiting, dizziness or severe weakness, blurred vision, rapid heart rate or weak pulse, difficulty breathing, or significant swelling

Critical First Aid Actions

- **Call 911 Immediately:** Antivenom is the only definitive treatment, and it should be administered as soon as possible.
- **Keep Calm and Still:** Venom travels through the lymphatic system, which is activated by movement; keeping the victim quiet slows its spread.
- **Remove Constricting Items:** Immediately remove rings, watches, or tight clothing near the bite area, as intense swelling will occur.
- **Positioning:** Keep the victim in a reclining position with the bitten limb at or below heart level.
- **Clean the Wound:** Gently wash the bite with soap and water to prevent infection. Cover the wound with clean bandage.
- **Mark the Area:** Use a pen to mark the edge of the swelling and note the time of the bite, repeating every 30 minutes to track progress.

What NOT to Do (Dangerous Myths)

- **Do NOT** use a tourniquet or constricting band, as this can lead to severe tissue damage and amputation.
- **Do NOT** try to suck out the venom (oral suction).
- **Do NOT** cut or slice the wound.
- **Do NOT** apply ice or immerse the wound in water.

- Do NOT consume alcohol or caffeine.
- Do NOT try to catch the snake.

Additional Information

- **Identify the Snake:** Only if it is safe to do so, take a photo from a distance. Do not try to catch or kill it.
- **Transportation:** Carry the victim, if possible, to reduce activity. If walking is necessary, do so slowly.
- **Medical Care:** The priority is reaching an emergency room, ideally within 30 minutes to 4 hours.

If you **KNOW** the snake is **NOT** venomous, treat the bite as a puncture wound.

Disclaimer: This information is for educational purposes based on common first-aid guidelines. Always seek professional medical treatment immediately for venomous snake bites.

SNAKEBITE FIRST AID FOR PETS

If a pet is bitten by a rattlesnake, immediately transport them to the nearest emergency veterinarian, calling ahead to ensure they have antivenom. Keep the pet calm, immobilized, and carry them to minimize movement. Do not use tourniquets or attempt to suck out venom; instead, keep the bite site below the heart.

Immediate First Aid Actions

- **Keep Calm:** Panicking increases the heart rate, which spreads venom faster.
- **Restrict Movement:** Carry your pet instead of letting them walk.
- **Positioning:** Keep the bitten area at or below the level of the heart, if possible.
- **Remove Collars:** If the bite is on the neck or face, remove the collar, as swelling can be severe.
- **Do Not:** Do not use a tourniquet, ice, or attempt to cut/suck the wound, as these can cause further damage.
- **Identification:** If possible, take a photo of the snake from a safe distance, but do not waste time attempting to catch it.

Veterinary Treatment

- **Antivenom:** The primary treatment to neutralize venom, best administered within 4 hours, though effective later.
- **Supportive Care:** Intravenous (IV) fluids to manage shock, pain medication, and potentially antibiotics.
- **Monitoring:** Bloodwork to check for coagulopathy (blood clotting issues).

Preventive and Preparatory Measures

- **Vaccine:** A rattlesnake vaccine is available to reduce symptoms and provide more time for treatment, though it does not eliminate the need for veterinary care. < * check with your vet. There is controversy whether or not this is advisable >
- **Avoidance Training:** Annual training can help dogs learn to avoid rattlesnakes.

- **Cost Considerations:** Treatment can be very expensive, often requiring significant, immediate care.

Signs of a Bite

Symptoms include severe swelling, pain, puncture marks (not always visible), bleeding, diarrhea, vomiting, and lethargy. Even if no marks are seen, sudden pain or swelling after being in a high-risk area requires immediate veterinary attention.