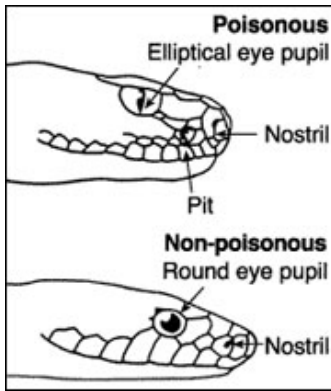


SNAKE BITE GUIDELINES

A health education message by Integrated Health Services (IHS Pakistan)



On average 5 million snakebites take place worldwide annually causing about 125,000 deaths. A snake may bite when it is surprised or feels threatened or trapped. Only 400 out of the 3,000 known species of snakes in the world are poisonous. Fortunately even poisonous snakes do not always leave their venom when they bite. Most snakebites are sustained on the arms and legs; the most harmful ones are on the head and chest.

Signs & Symptoms

Commonly there is pain and swelling around the bite. If the bite is by a poisonous snake than there can be red skin with blisters, dark area under the skin, nausea and vomiting. In addition there can be fever, headache, chills, sweating and blurred vision. There can also be tingling and no feeling on hands, feet and area around the mouth. The most dangerous symptoms include troubled breathing, fainting, fits or seizures.

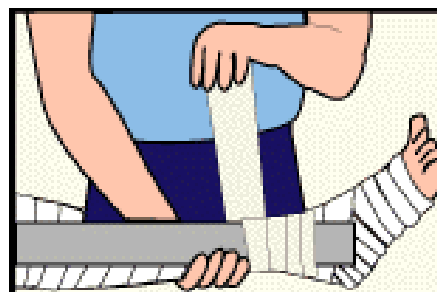
What *TO DO* if bitten by a venomous snake?

1. Stay calm and make the patient lie down on his back. Immobilize. No movement.
2. Allow bite to bleed freely for 15-30 sec. Do not suck or cut.
3. Remove any rings or constricting items; the affected area may swell.
4. Cleanse and rapidly disinfect area with Betadine or pyodine or simply wash with soap and water.
5. If bite is on hand, finger, foot or toe, wrap leg/arm rapidly with 4`` to 6`` crepe bandage past the knee or elbow joint immobilizing it. Leave area of fang marks open. Wrap no tighter than one would for a sprain. Make sure peripheral pulses are present.
6. Apply venom extractor immediately until there is no more drainage from fang marks. Extractor can be left in place 30 minutes or more if necessary. It also aids in keeping the venom from spreading by applying a negative pressure against the tissue where the venom was initially deposited and creates a gradient that favors the movement of venom toward the extractor's external collection cup.
7. If extractor is not available: Apply hard direct pressure from the sides of the bite using a 4 x 4 gauze pad folded in half twice thus squeezing any venom that may come out. Tape in place with adhesive tape.
8. Soak gauze pad in Betadine / Pyodine solution.
9. Strap gauze pad tightly in place over the bite with adhesive tape.
10. Check for pulses above and below crepe bandage - if absent it is too tight. Unpin and loosen.
11. Immobilize bitten extremity, use splints, if available.
12. If possible, try and keep bitten extremity at heart level or in a gravity-neutral position. Raising it above heart level can cause venom to travel into the body. Holding it down, below heart level can increase swelling.
13. Monitor the vital signs of the victim. If there are signs of shock (such as paleness, cool, clammy skin) lay the victim flat, raise the feet about a foot, and cover the victim with a blanket.
14. Rush to nearest hospital or medical facility as soon as possible.
15. Try and identify, kill and bring (ONLY if safe to do so) offending snake. This is the least important thing you should do. Visual identification/description usually suffices.

16. Bites to face, torso or buttocks are more of a problem. Disinfect as mentioned above and shave the hairy area with a razor. Use extractor device until there is no further drainage possible and then apply pressure dressing with gauze pad and tape. Crepe bandaging cannot be applied to such bites.
17. Anti Venom is the only and best treatment for snakebite and you must get as much as is necessary as soon as possible. Anti Venom administration should not be delayed. Up to 20 vials may be needed to neutralize the effects of rattlesnake, cobra or viper. At all OPII fields 2 vials of Anti Venom are present at the Field Clinics that can be given i/m immediately. More stocks are at Islamabad Head Office for North Fields and at the Naimat Baisal Clinic for South fields. Immediately call the Company Doctor so that Anti Venom can be mobilized to the hospital where the casualty is being taken, as usually the hospitals don't have enough Anti Venom.

What **NOT TO DO** if Bitten by a Venomous Snake?

1. Contrary to advice given elsewhere DO NOT permit removal of pressure dressings or crepe bandage until you are at a facility ready and able to administer Anti Venom. As soon as the dressings are released the venom will spread causing the usual expected problems of venomous snakebite. The hospital at this time must be prepared to administer the Anti Venom.
2. Do not eat or drink anything unless allowed by medical sources.
3. Do not engage in strenuous physical activity.
4. Do not apply oral (mouth) suction to bite.
5. Do not cut into or incise bite marks with a blade.
6. Do not take / use any medication.
7. Do not apply hot or cold packs.
8. Do not apply a narrow, constrictive tourniquet such as a belt, necktie or cord.
9. Do not waste time or take any risks trying to kill, bag or bring in offending snake.



* Remember bandaging must not be wrapped so tight as to cut off systemic venous or arterial circulation. Properly applied such bandages will NOT compromise the systemic circulation.

Also **REMEMBER**.....

1. If you come across any snake in the field do not approach it, try and examine it or photograph it. Move away from it as expediently as possible.
2. Do not try to handle or catch the snake.
3. Always wear long boots and tucked in trousers while you are in the field especially at nighttime.
4. OPII has its own Anti Venom stocks that are with the Field Doctor at Naimat Baisal. In case of a bite inform NB so that Anti Venom can be immediately sent to the hospital (Rajputana / Isra / Aga Khan) where the patient is being taken.

*A health education message by Integrated Health Services (IHS)
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