

BLACK MAMBA



GREEN MAMBA



SNOUTED COBRA



VINE SNAKE



HORNED ADDER



GABOON VIPER



PYTHON



BOOMSLANG



PUFF ADDER



RINKELS



## Symptoms

Snakebite symptoms vary dramatically from bite to bite. Many snakebites take place so quickly that victims are not always certain that they have actually been bitten. A bite mark is seldom the characteristic two-fang puncture mark – often a bite will be from a single fang and may just be a scratch with a little bleeding.

In the event of a snakebite, the victim may have some of the following symptoms

- An immediate burning pain, followed by swelling, which progresses up the limb and may affect the lymph glands (the Puff Adder and the Mozambique Spitting Cobra).
- Dizziness, difficulty in swallowing and breathing, drooping eyelids and nausea (the mambas and the Cape Cobra).
- Bleeding from the nose, small cuts, followed by bleeding from the mucous membranes and, after several hours, and severe internal bleeding (the Boomslang and the Twig Snake).
- Shock, which can cause nausea, pain and difficulty in breathing.
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## In the Event of A Snakebite DO NOT...

- DO NOT try to cut or suck out the venom
- Snake venom very quickly attaches to local tissue and is absorbed into the lymphatic system and very little venom can be removed by suction. Cutting may expose the wound to secondary infection.
- DO NOT apply any electric shock therapy
- Electric shocks do not neutralise snake venom.
- DO NOT apply a tourniquet
- Arterial or venous tourniquets are not advised in most bites as venom is initially transported largely through the lymphatic system and not through veins. There is little evidence that a tourniquet could be life-saving following a snakebite.
- DO NOT apply ice or boiling water, lotion or potions
- Leave the bite site alone, except for cleaning it with cool water and applying a sterile gauze dressing. Boiling water does not denature snake venom. Do not give the victim alcohol.
- DO NOT inject antivenom as a first aid measure

If required, antivenom must be injected intravenously by a medical doctor in a hospital environment and usually in large quantities. Some patients have an allergic reaction to antivenom and this may result in anaphylaxis – a life-threatening condition if not treated promptly.

## First Aid Measures for Snakebite

- Get the victim to a hospital as soon as possible and in a safe manner
- Keep the victim calm and as still as possible
- Movement speeds up the spread of venom in the lymphatic system. Immobilise the victim, lay the victim down if possible and transport (or arrange transport) to the closest hospital. Elevate the affected limb slightly above heart level.
- Remove rings and tight clothing
- If bitten on the hand, arm, foot, or lower leg, remove rings, bangles, bracelets, watches, anklets and any other tight jewellery, as well as tight clothing and shoes.
- Apply pressure bandages
- If you are more than an hour or two from the closest medical facility, consider applying pressure bandages to the affected limb, but only in suspected Black Mamba or Cape Cobra bites. Please see section on Smart Bandages.

