



MAFES Dawg Tracks

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Safety Tips: Protection from Snakes

Spring is just around the corner and with it the “Shoulder-less Men” or Mr. No-Shoulders” will soon be making their appearance. The gurus say that snakes won’t bite. I don’t believe it nor will I get close enough to find out, if I know it.

Statistics by the American Association of Poison Control Centers report shows that:

- In 2002- Reported 2,325 snakebites –only 2 deaths in the USA.
- The AAPCC showed a more relative number of 8,000 bite per year.
- Worldwide numbers showed an estimate of 2.5 million bites and 125,000 deaths.
- A statistic from another source showed 7,000 bites with less than 15 deaths in the USA.

Snake scientists say that snakes aren’t aggressive but just inquisitive. All species of snakes here in Mississippi have the ability to bite, but all of them do not release venom. In most cases envenomation occurs because a person is trying to kill the snake or catch it.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF ENVENOMATION-

- ✓ Fang marks
- ✓ Intense local pain
- ✓ Rapid swelling
- ✓ Discoloration
- ✓ Oozing of blood from the fang marks
- ✓ If the fang marks are present but there is very little or no pain, swelling or discoloration and the bite is dry, envenomation is probably minimal.

Many snakebite victims are discharged from the hospital within 24 hours and recover with no long term effects. Despite this fact, you should always seek medical help.

TIPS FOR PROTECTION-

According to the specialists the risk of a poisonous snakebite is less than getting struck by lightning. The risks of a snakebite can further be reduced by:

- Cleaning up refuse and other idle materials around the property and buildings.
- Wear boots and long pants in wooded areas.
- Walk carefully and softly in areas where snakes are likely to be resting or nesting.

CHARACTERISTICS OF POISONOUS SNAKES-

Most poisonous snakes in the USA are in the pit viper group.

They can be identified by:

- ~Pits on the head
- ~Vertical pupils
- ~A triangular head
- ~ Slim neck
- ~A heavy body with a single row of scales on the underside of its tail.

The pit viper group includes groups of the major categories of copperhead and cottonmouth and two major categories of rattlesnakes. All the pit vipers may vibrate their tails rapidly to make noise when threatened.

Coral snakes are the other type of poisonous snake found in Mississippi, along with several other southern states. They are brightly-colored, nocturnal snakes with neurotoxic venom more like the cobra venom than pit viper venom. Unlike other snakes, the coral must bite, chew and hang on to the victim in order to deposit the venom. One study revealed that 85% of coral snake victims stated that the coral snake bit and hung on and had to be actively removed. The coral snake bites are rare, accounting for less than 1% of all venomous snakebites in the USA. This is due in part to their small size, nocturnal and burrowing lifestyle and are rarely encountered by people.

FACTS & PRECAUTIONS-

- Very few snakes are aggressive. If they are swimming toward you, they are probably more curious than aggressive.
- Snakes only strike 2/3rds of the length of their body. (A three foot snake could only reach up to two feet).
- If bitten by a snake, one should look at the characteristics to determine the type of snake that it is. Venomous snakes will leave 2 visible fang marks. Non-venomous snakes may leave a mark that resembles a scratch.
- Smaller snakes are harder to identify than large ones and usually inject more venom than the adults.
- Victims bitten by a venomous should get to a hospital as quickly as possible. If this isn’t possible, wrap a constricting band between the bite and the heart to slow it down, but do not stop the blood flow. **Do not apply a tourniquet!** The best alternative is to get to a hospital as quickly as possible.

FIRST AID TIPS-

- ✓ If the victim isn’t breathing or can’t be aroused, call 911.
- ✓ Keep them calm and reassure the victim. If the snake is still in the area, don’t attempt to kill it or catch it unless it poses a threat to you or the victim. Try to remember the identity of the snake so that you can help identify it from pictures in the hospital.
- ✓ Remove any items on the victim’s body that may restrict circulation.
- ✓ Immobilize the area as much as possible and try to keep the bite at or slightly below the level of the heart.
- ✓ Wash the area thoroughly, but do not scrub hard as this can cause absorption.
- ✓ Try to keep the victim from moving about rapidly while evacuating them to transportation.
- ✓ Do not give the victim anything to eat or drink, particularly alcohol.
- ✓ Do not make any cuts or apply suction to the area.
- ✓ Do not use ice on the affected area.
- ✓ Do not attempt to give an anti-venom vaccine.

IF YOU FIGGET WITH A **snake-
YOU MIGHT LOSE A DIGIT!**

PUT SAFETY FIRST <>> PREVENT THE WORST

SAFE TODAY - ALIVE TOMORROW

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Excerpts: Miss. Regional Poison Control Ctr.
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