

# First aid for a snake bite

- ◆ Most snakes aren't dangerous to humans. Only about 15% worldwide are venomous. In Belarus Water Uzh (Водяной Уж) , Common Viper (Обыкновенная Гадюка), Smooth snake are most common to meet. Their bites can cause severe injuries and sometimes death.
- ◆ If a venomous snake bites you, call 103 immediately, especially if the bitten area changes color, begins to swell or is painful. Many emergency rooms stock antivenom drugs, which may help you.



# Symptoms

- ◆ **Most snakebites occur on the extremities. Typical symptoms of the bite from a nonvenomous snake are pain and scratches at the site.**
- ◆ **Usually, after a bite from a venomous snake, there is severe burning pain at the site within 15 to 30 minutes. This can progress to swelling and bruising at the wound and all the way up the arm or leg. Other signs and symptoms include nausea, labored breathing and a general sense of weakness, as well as an odd taste in the mouth.**
- ◆ **Some snakes, such as coral snakes, have toxins that cause neurological symptoms, such as skin tingling, difficulty speaking and weakness.**
- ◆ **Sometimes, a venomous snake can bite without injecting venom. The result of these "dry bites" is irritation at the site.**

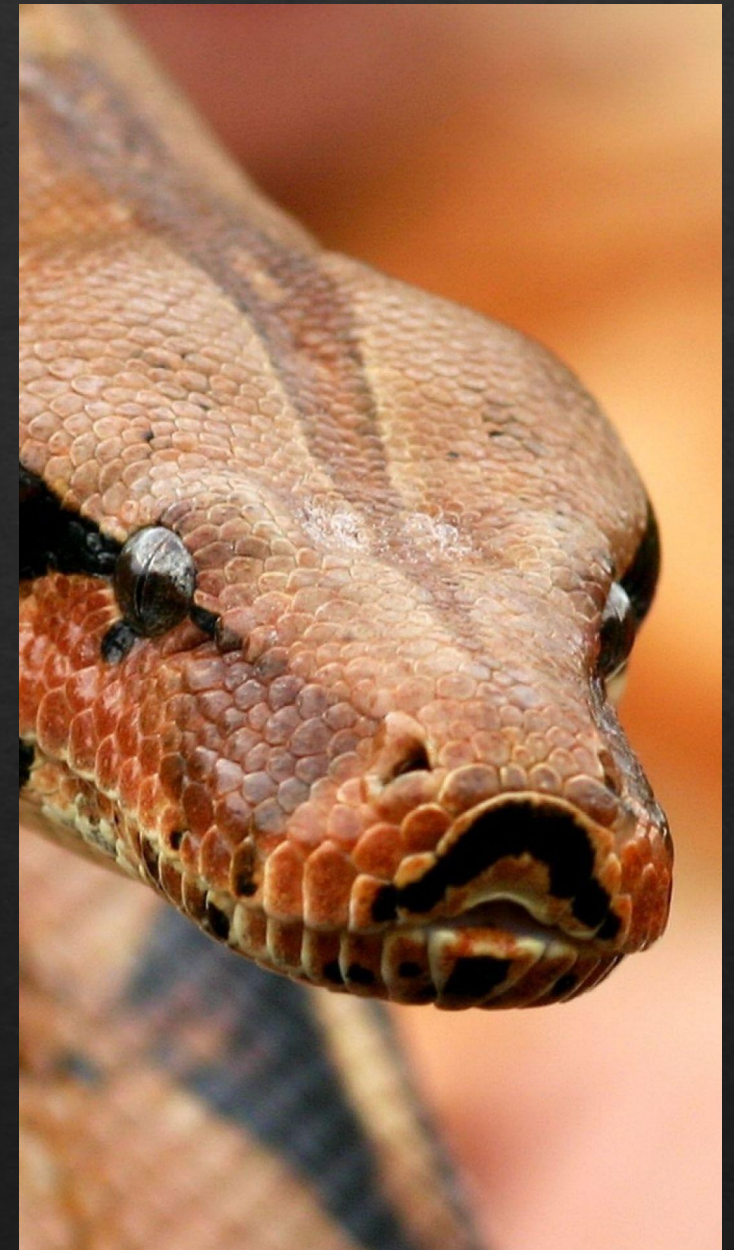


# Call an ambulance immediately

**You should treat any snake bite as an emergency, regardless of whether you think the snake was venomous or not. Many snakes look similar, and if you wait to see if you feel symptoms of venom poisoning, it might be too late by the time you get help.**

## **What to do**

- ◆ **You need to stay as still as possible, so rather than running for a phone, use a mobile phone or have someone else go and call for help. Call 103 and ask for an ambulance.**



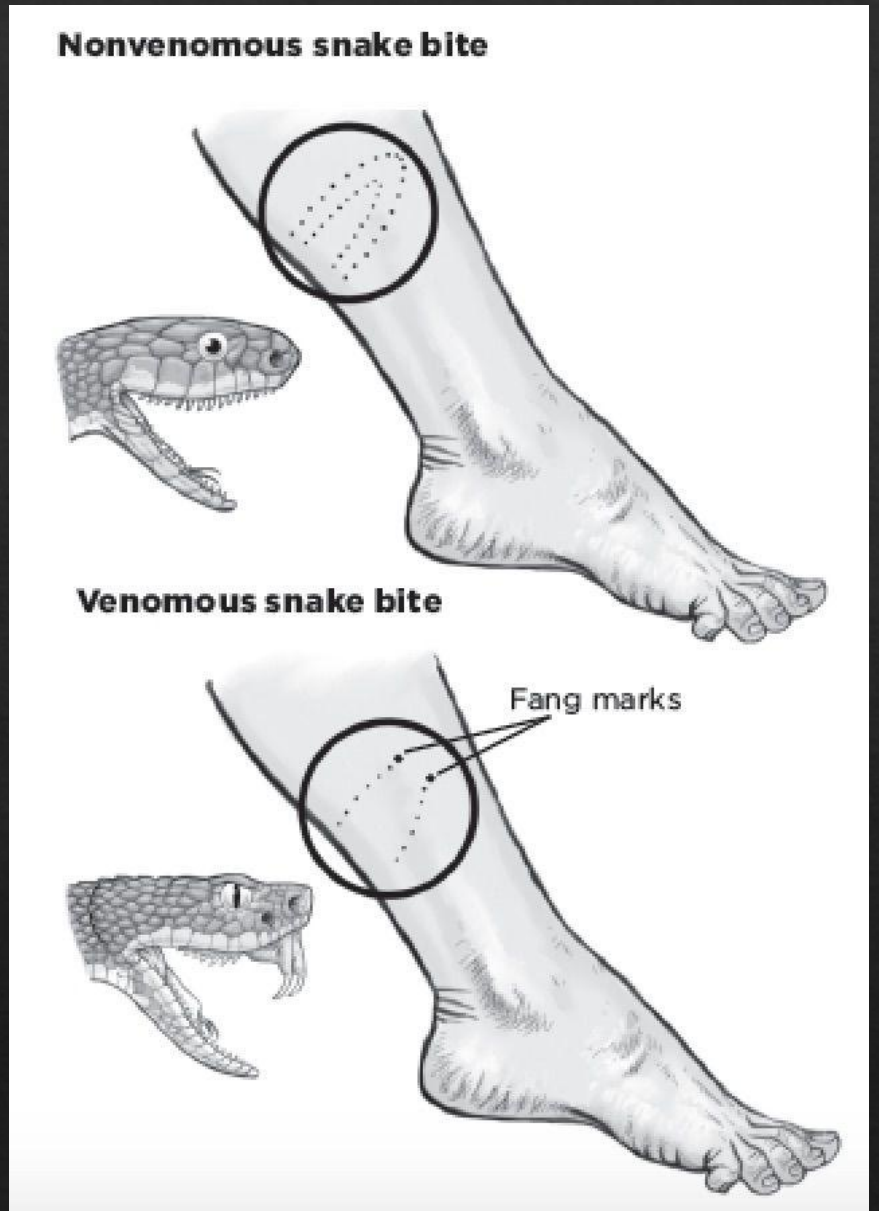
# Don't panic and don't move

While it's easier said than done, staying calm and still after a snake bite can help slow down the spread of venom in your body. If you've been bitten by a poisonous snake, not moving might save your life.

It's a myth that snake venom gets straight into your blood stream after a bite. Instead, it moves through your lymphatic system. Lymph is a fluid in your body that contains white blood cells. Unlike blood, which is pumped around your body continuously, your lymph moves when you move your limbs. If you can stay still and calm, you can prevent the venom in your lymph traveling further into your body.

## What to do

- ◆ If you're sure the snake has moved away after biting you and you're not in danger of being bitten again, remain where you are, rather than walking to get help. If you're with other people, they shouldn't move you at all, but start administering first aid where you are.
- ◆ Take long, deep breaths to help calm yourself down. Remember that the odds are in your favour: it's rare for people to die after being bitten by a snake, especially if they follow first aid steps.



# Leave the snake alone

- ◆ Don't try to identify, catch, injure or kill the snake – you're likely to come off second best. At the hospital, staff have access to a range of tests that can help them determine the likely snake which you have been bitten by, enabling them to give you the most appropriate treatment.



# Apply a pressure immobilisation bandage and splint

Most snake bites occur on a limb, so legs, feet, arms and hands are most commonly affected. If you've been bitten on a limb, applying a pressure immobilisation bandage can stop the venom moving through your lymphatic system.

## What to do

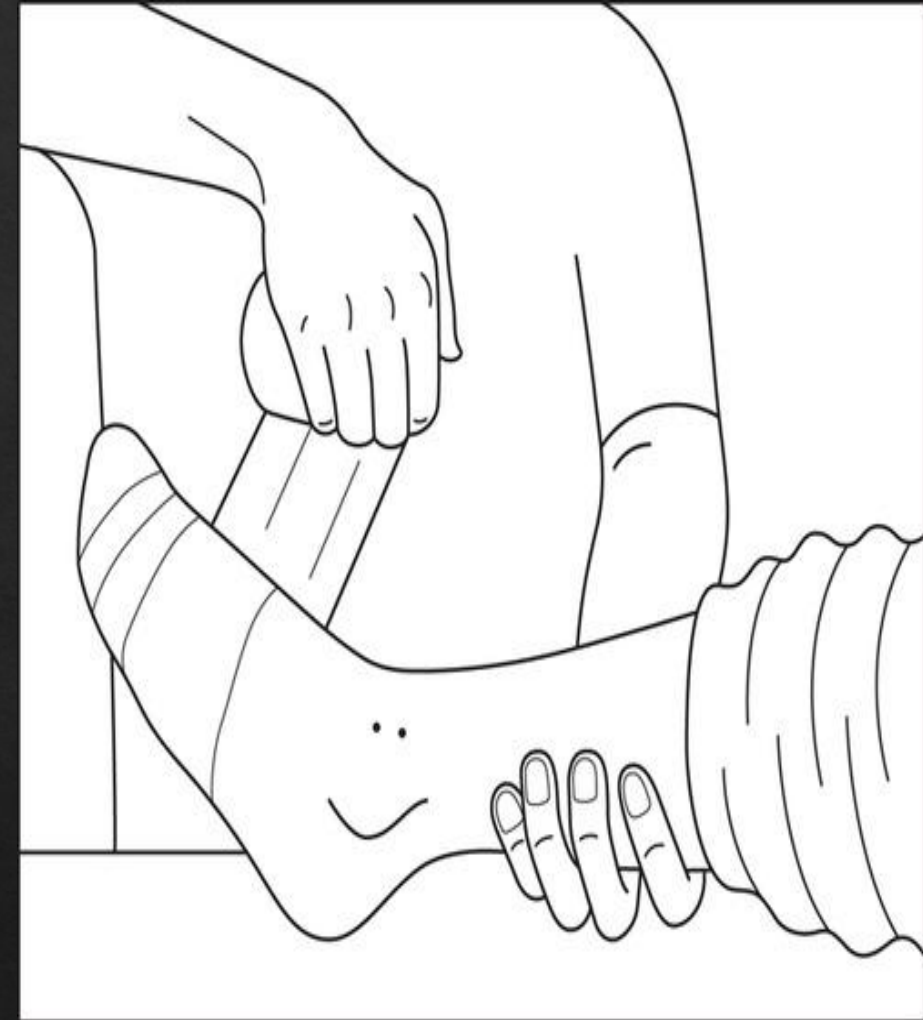
If you've got a pad or even a piece of plastic like cling wrap, put it over the bite site to either soak up or protect the venom for later testing.

Apply a pressure immobilisation bandage by following the steps below:

- ◆ use an elasticised roller bandage that is 10-15cm wide
- ◆ roll bandage over bite site
- ◆ apply a second elasticised roller bandage, starting just above the fingers or toes and moving upwards on the bitten limb as far as the bandage will reach
- ◆ apply the bandage as tightly as possible to the limb
- ◆ if you don't have a bandage handy, any stretchy material will do (torn up t-shirts, stockings or other fabric can be used as a bandage)

Once the bandage is on, mark the bite site on the bandage with a pen or other substance that will leave a mark – if you've got nothing else on you, putting a little mud or dirt on the bandage will work. Then, splint the limb to keep it still. Any straight object will do – a stick, rolled up newspaper or even firmly rolled up clothes or tarps can all work. Fix the splint in place by securing it to the limb with bandages or other material.

If you've been bitten on your head, neck or torso, you don't need to put on a pressure immobilisation bandage.



# Don't wash, suck, cut or tourniquet the bite

- ◆ There are a lot of old methods of treating snake bites that are now known to cause more harm than good.
- ◆ Washing the snake bite site can wash off venom that the hospital staff may be able to use to identify the type of snake that bit you. You should also keep clothing from around the bite site, because additional movement can cause venom to more readily move into the blood stream.
- ◆ Do not suck or cut the bite area. Do not apply a tourniquet to the limb – this can be dangerous.



Eleanora sucks poison from the wound of her husband King Edward I.  
by Angelika Kauffmann

# Prevention of snake bites

- ❖ Snake bites can be prevented in many cases. It's best to refrain from approaching or handling snakes in the wild. Avoid typical places where snakes like to hide, such as patches of tall grass and piled leaves, and rock and woodpiles. If you encounter a snake, give it space to retreat and let it take cover. It's in the snake's nature to avoid interaction.
- ❖ When working outside where snakes may be present, wear tall boots, long pants, and leather gloves. Avoid working outside during the night and in warmer weather, which is when snakes are most active.



**Thanks for attention**