

Rattlesnake Safety Information

1. Prevention: Appreciate snakes from a distance, rattlesnakes have no interest in biting humans and usually give fair warning before striking.
 - a. Before sitting on a rock, look closely around the area (use your hiking stick to help explore).
 - b. If a snake is seen or heard, calmly and quietly back up at least 8-10 feet or more.
2. If a rattlesnake strikes a hiker, move that person plus all other hikers well beyond the snake's striking distance —at least 20 feet or more away from the snake. Snakes have been known to strike more than once.
3. Call 911 immediately or use the In Reach to notify medical personnel. Have the pen/pencil and pad of paper from the medical kit handy so that you can jot down any medical advice from emergency responders.
4. A picture of the snake is a nice to have, but do not put yourself or others at risk to take a picture. Try to remember the color and shape of the snake so that you can describe it, unless you know for sure it was a rattlesnake. Do not capture the snake.
5. Keep the hiker still and calm to help slow the spread of the venom. Give them calm reassurance that help is on its way. Have them breathe slowly and relax as much as possible.
6. A snake bite can usually be identified by two fang marks. If possible, use the sharpie in the first aid kit to draw a small circle around the bite and add the current time.
7. Remove jewelry, such as watches, bracelets, and rings. Remove any other tight clothing around the bite area.
8. If possible, position the hiker so that the bite is at or below the level of the heart.
9. Consider using the pulse oximeter in the medical kit to monitor breathing and heart rate. Notify the emergency response team if there are any big changes in the hiker's oxygen reading and/or heart rate.
10. Treatments to avoid:
 - a. Do not use a tourniquet.
 - b. Do not apply ice or cold compresses.
 - c. Do not cut the wound or attempt to remove venom.

- d. Usually, the hiker should not have water, food, or pain medication but double check with the emergency responder.
 - e. The hiker should not drink alcohol or caffeine, which could speed the body's absorption of the venom.
11. Consult with the emergency responder on whether to start hiking back or not. Your emergency contact knows your location, the location of the nearest/fastest available help, and the location of the closest facility that has the antivenom.
 12. If unable to contact emergency services, it may be necessary for the hiker to be carried out or for them to walk out slowly (no running or rushing to avoid increased heart rate) to an area where emergency contact can be established.
 13. Rattlesnake bites are rarely deadly and usually treated with antivenom. The sooner the antivenom is started, the sooner irreversible damage from the venom can be stopped. Rattlesnake antivenom can be expensive (several thousands of dollars) but insurance usually covers the cost.
 14. All snake bites should be considered venomous and require medical consultation. Although rattlesnakes can bite without injecting venom (dry bite), this determination is best done by medical personnel.
 15. Even if the snake is dead, the snake can still be dangerous. A snake's reflexes can still cause the snake to strike up to an hour after it has died.

Resources

1. Asclepius Snakebite Foundation: How to Survive a Snakebite in the Wilderness: <https://www.snakebitefoundation.org/blog/2018/9/6/how-to-survive-a-snakebite-in-the-wilderness>
2. John Hopkins Medicine: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/snake-bites>
3. Healthline: <https://www.healthline.com/health/rattlesnake-bite>
4. Mayo Clinic: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/first-aid/first-aid-snake-bites/basics/art-20056681>
5. Cleveland Clinic: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/15647-snake-bites>
6. American Hiking Guide: <https://americanhiking.org/resources/snake-bite/>
7. Banner Health: <https://www.bannerhealth.com/newsroom/press-releases/snake-season>
8. Cedars Sinai: <https://www.cedars-sinai.org/health-library/diseases-and-conditions/v/venomous-snakebites.html>
9. WebMD: <https://www.webmd.com/first-aid/snakebite>
10. Rattlesnake Solutions: Arizona's Hikers Guide to Rattlesnake Safety <https://rattlesnakesolutions.com/snakeblog/science-and-education/arizona-hikers-guide-to-rattlesnake-safety/?gclid=>
11. Up to Date: <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/bites-by-crotalinae-snakes-rattlesnakes-water-moccasins-cottonmouths-or-copperheads-in-the-united-states-management#H377516135>
12. CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/snakes/symptoms.html>
13. Goodyear Fire Dispatch call who recommended if bitten by a rattlesnake call 911 and follow their directions. Each case will depend on the situation.