

# NATIONAL SNAKEBITE SUPPORT

## VETERINARY SNAKEBITE MANAGEMENT

### Pre-Hospital for Dogs and Cats

- Distance yourself and pets from the snake
- Take a photo of the snake, if possible
- Do not attempt to capture, kill, or transport the snake
- Remove collars, leashes, or harnesses
- Avoid excitement or strenuous activity

**Do not administer any medications, especially NSAIDs**

Seek veterinary care immediately! If possible, call ahead to confirm antivenom is in stock.

**IF NIGHT OR  
WEEKEND**

24-hour specialty, critical care,  
or emergency hospital

**IF OFFICE  
HOURS**

Nearest veterinary hospital  
that can assess and stabilize  
your pet

#### Request a transfer if:

- Provider does not stock antivenom and opiates and/or does not have capability for monitoring overnight
- or-
- Patient's condition is deteriorating

#### Keep in mind:

- After hours, do not waste valuable time trying to find a local veterinarian to treat your pet. Proceed to the nearest regional after-hour emergency clinics as soon as possible (even if it is several hours away).
- Antivenom is helpful as long as there are ongoing venom effects. Even if you do not find your injured pet until the next day, you should still take the above steps.
- Many practices can deliver excellent care during the day, but may need to transfer to a regional emergency clinic for overnight care.

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# NATIONAL SNAKEBITE SUPPORT

## VETERINARY PIT VIPER ENVENOMATION FOR DOGS AND CATS

### INDICATED / RECOMMENDED TREATMENT

- Antivenom** The only thing that can neutralize venom. Nothing else addresses swelling, bruising, tissue damage, pain, hematologic changes, and long-term effects from envenomations.
- IV Fluids** Precise control of patient hydration.
- Pain management** Pit viper envenomation is an extremely painful condition.
- Bloodwork** Helps assess the progression or regression of hematologic changes.

### CONTRAINDICATED / DO NOT ADMINISTER

- NSAIDs** Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, including, but not limited to, carprofen and meloxicam, can increase bleeding tendencies. Bleeding risks are already increased due to venom effects. NSAIDs can also cause significant kidney injury.
- Corticosteroids (aka steroids)** Corticosteroids, including, but not limited to, dexamethasone and prednisone, increase the risk of delayed healing and gastric ulceration/perforation. When combined with NSAIDs, the risk of septic peritonitis and potentially fatal GI bleeds is even higher.
- Subcutaneous fluids** Administering fluids under the skin causes some bleeding. The tendency to bleed is already increased due to the venom.
- Human Medications** Human medications can be fatal to pets and should never be administered except as instructed by a veterinarian.
- Home Remedies** There are no effective home remedies for pit viper envenomation. Some home therapies may cause additional harm and complicate or prolong proper veterinary treatment.

### NOT INDICATED / OF NO BENEFIT

- Benadryl** Benadryl is an antihistamine that is useful in treating swelling and inflammation mediated by a body chemical called histamine. Histamines are released by the body in cases of allergic reactions and in response to bee, wasp, and hornet stings.
- Swelling from pit viper envenomation is caused by massive tissue damage mediated by hemotoxins, cytotoxins, and myotoxins, not by histamine release.
- Using antihistamines to address swelling related to snake venom is of zero benefit, and may cause dangerous altered mentation in patients experiencing shock.
- Antibiotics** Antibiotics prescribed during the initial treatment of envenomation are unnecessary. Antibiotics should be prescribed only if infection has been diagnosed.

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