

Attention ...

**.....SNAKES!!!!!!**



### How do you avoid snake bites?

- ✓ Wear a long boots and trousers (which in rainforest also provide some protection against leeches).
- ✓ Make a noise (or to be more correct vibrations in the surroundings -snakes are deaf but react to shaking).
- ✓ Beat and bash with a long branch or twig in the area 3 to 5 paces ahead, and stand still for a short time before taking the next step. By far the majority of snakes prefer to flee if given the chance.
- ✓ Avoid going out in a snake area in darkness. If it is necessary to do so, then take a strong torch with you. Snakes prefer to evade bright light and vibrations.
- ✓ If you see a snake, you should stand completely still. It will instinctively prefer to go away and most snakes predominantly attack moving targets.
- ✓ Do not put your hands down into holes, dark cavities or cracks in rock, even if something has fallen down it.
- ✓ To reclaim anything you can attempt to fish it out with a stick, standing well away from the hole. Creepy-crawlers other than snakes (for example scorpions) may also be poisonous, and they are all lightning fast.
- ✓ The best possible advice is not to touch a snake in the wild.
- ✓ The worse thing you can do is try to pick one up so that the doctor can identify it!
  
- ✓ If you see a dead snake, you should keep well clear. Many people have been bitten 2 or 3 times by dead snakes. Only if someone has been bitten should you make sure that the snake is killed and take it along for identification, but hold it by its tail and continue to watch out for his head, or preferably put it in a sack that can be held away from the body.

### Symptoms and danger signals

The risk of snake bites depends on many factors, such as:

- ✓ The species and the size of the snake.
- ✓ The amount of venom injected.
- ✓ The number of bites.
- ✓ The localisation of the bites (bites in the head or on the body are more dangerous, but the bites will typically be on arms or legs).
- ✓ The weight of the victim most dangerous for children).
- ✓ The general state of health of the victim.
- ✓ -Individual sensitivity to the venom.

### Symptoms with rapid onset:

Local pain, swelling and discoloration at the site of the bite are to be expected, but may not arise immediately after the bite and the general reactions often do not appear until 8 to 24 hours have elapsed. Within the first 10 to 15 minutes to a few hours after the bite has occurred, general symptoms may appear such as a sense of anxiety, malaise, vomiting, headache, dizziness, bouts of sweating, respiratory distress, bleeding, heart failure and shock, muscle contractions, confusion, convulsions, paralysis, unconsciousness and death.



### Symptoms with later onset (6 to 24 hours after a bite)

- ✓ Local (around the site of the bite): increasing and massive swelling of the whole arm, even if the bite wound is located right out on the hand. Blistering and bleeding often occur in the skin and tissues just below it, and muscles. Blood clots may occur in the surrounding blood vessels. Necrosis (tissue death) of skin, connective tissue and muscles is in evident risk.
- ✓ General symptoms: increasing grogginess, vomiting, respiratory difficulties, fever, falling blood pressure and shock.
- ✓ Bleeding from the mucous membranes, bloody vomit and stool and blood in the urine may also occur.
- ✓ Disturbances of sensation or paralysis may occur, often first in the face and later in the muscle involved in swallowing and breathing

### Snake venoms act in 3 different ways:

- ✓ Haemotoxins, ie venoms split the red blood cells, or affect the ability of the blood to clot (coagulate).
- ✓ Neurotoxins, ie venoms that in particular paralyse nerve transmission to the muscles and in the worst case paralyse the muscles involved in the swallowing and breathing.
- ✓ Cardiotoxins, ie venoms that have a direct harmful action on the heart and lead to circulatory failure and shock.
  
- ✓ But as a number of the other factors, including possible allergic reactions, are also involved in poisoning, the situation is often far more complex and unclear, and there are often typically mixed reactions and symptoms.



### First aid for snake bite.

- ✓ Do not panic. Only a few poisonous snakes are really dangerous to humans. In addition, often no venom will be injected with the bite.
- ✓ Avoid all unnecessary movement to prevent any venom from spreading in the body.
- ✓ If possible wash the site of the bite quickly and carefully with clean water and soap.
- ✓ Spit from Asian and African spitting cobras must be washed away immediately from the eyes and mucous membranes to prevent it from being absorbed into the body.
- ✓ A firm bandage (wide tourniquet) can be placed over and, if necessary, around the site of the bite which may reduce the uptake and spread of the venom, but it is important that a pulse can continue to be felt on the far side of the bandage.
- ✓ It is important to keep the airways free of mucus, vomit and blood.
- ✓ Ensure that the victim is transported as quickly as possible to a doctor or hospital. The patient must be driven or carried, and if the person is suffering from nausea and vomiting they should be made to sit up or be placed in the recovery position, ie lying on their side, to prevent any vomit from going down into the airways and lungs.
- ✓ Many snake venoms act quite slowly (4 to 20 hours after the bite), but this should not delay the transport, as other factors may also be involved.
  
- ✓ There is often an urgent need for treatment with oxygen, attachment to a drip and possibly anti shock treatment.
- ✓ Antiserum treatment may be appropriate and life-saving, but should always be overseen by a doctor.