

First aid for snake bites can prevent disability, disfigurement or death if it is applied effectively and efficiently.

Recommendations have changed drastically over the years, and staying informed on effective first aid should be a priority of everyone working in snake habitat. A good first-aid course from a qualified instructor should be sought.

- Assume envenomation has occurred even before symptoms appear.
- Identify the species of venomous snake with care. This could help with the medical treatment but will complicate the situation if there is more than one victim. If you cannot identify the snake, don't pursue it.
- Keep the victim as calm as possible. Keep yourself calm as well.
- Know and treat for any symptoms of shock – elevate feet, loosen clothing, etc. Wash the bite area with disinfectant soap.
- Remove constricting clothing or jewelry in the bite area. Prevent movement of the bitten extremity. Splint it, if necessary.
- Seek medical attention as soon as possible.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES should you cut between the punctures, suck the venom out or apply electric shock!

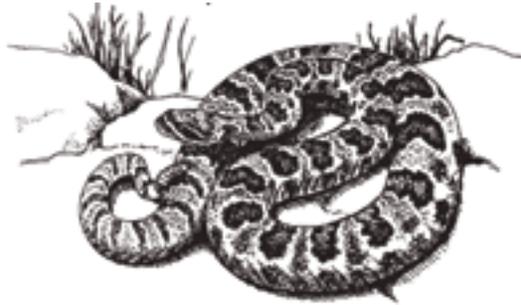
For more information

Excellent, current information on Texas snakes and particularly the venomous snakes, can be found in a number of books. Some suggested reading includes:

Price, Andrew H. (1998) *Poisonous Snakes of Texas*. Texas Parks and Wildlife Press, Austin.

Tennant, Alan. (1998) *A Field Guide to Texas Snakes*. Second Edition. Gulf Publishing Company, Houston.

Werler, Jon E. and James R. Dixon. (2000) *Texas Snakes: Identification, Distribution, and Natural History*. University of Texas Press, Austin.



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TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

Texas Venomous Snakes



SAFETY FIRST!

Safety and first-aid information about venomous snakes found in Texas



The state of Texas is home to 15 potentially dangerous venomous snake species or subspecies.

Despite this, each year there have been more deaths in Texas attributed to lightning than to venomous snakebites. This is due, in part, to the public's increasing awareness of snakes around us, improved first-aid and medical practices, and excellent educational and outreach efforts by herpetologists and snake enthusiasts across the state. More information on each of these species can be found in many excellent books, including Andy Price's *Poisonous Snakes of Texas*.

This brochure provides simple and timely safety and first-aid information about the venomous snakes found in Texas. It is important to remember that not every snake is venomous, and while the very mention of the word often sends chills up the spines of many humans, snakes do have an important role in our Texas ecosystem. Their contribution can hardly be overstated. Equally important is an understanding that envenomation is a defensive mechanism for the snake, as they do not sit in the grass waiting for the unfortunate human to come by. Nor do they pursue or hunt humans. Bites are almost always a result of the snake being surprised or cornered, or being handled.

Safety around the home

As our population continues to grow and people continue to move into "pristine" and "untouched" areas, encounters with venomous snakes are going to occur. Many of these encounters happen around the home, with the result that incidents of bites close to home are statistically high.

Snakes in general are found around a home for the specific purpose of seeking food and shelter. Keeping these things in mind provides us with guidelines to help prevent snakebites:

- Keep wood piles, brush piles, trash dumps and livestock pens as far as possible from the residence. Exercise caution when working in these areas. Never put an arm or leg into something if you cannot see the bottom.
- Keep storage areas and livestock sheds/barns as neat as possible. Treat tools and materials stored on the floor as possible snake shelters.
- Treat overturned boats, tarps and similar objects as potential shelter for transient snakes moving through the area.
- Remember that snakes are adept at finding their way through small openings. Keep this in mind when entering crawl spaces, garages, basements and similar areas.

Safety in the field

Since venomous snakes are more common in the rural areas of Texas, it is important for ranchers, hunters, rural residents, outdoor enthusiasts, and others who frequent these areas to exercise caution.

- Be careful where you put your hands and feet. Don't reach or step until you see the bottom.
- Never step over a log without first seeing what is on the other side. If you must move a log, use a long stick or garden tool first, to ensure snakes are neither on, under or around these favored places.
- Use a flashlight when moving about, even in your yard at night.
- Animal burrows make excellent habitat for snakes. Don't reach in without checking first.
- Wear protective clothing if working in areas where you suspect snakes are nearby. Heavy footwear, snakeproof trousers and/or leggings will help reduce your risk.
- Freeze when snakes are known to be nearby until you know where they are. Allow the snake to retreat. If you must move, back slowly and carefully away from the snake.

