

Venomous Texas Snakes

Snake Bite Statistics

- About 7,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes in the U.S. annually.
- Only 0.2% (1 out of 500) venomous snake bites result in death
- On average, 1 to 2 people in Texas die each year from venomous snake bites in Texas.
- Roughly half of all venomous snake bites are "dry." That is, the snake does not inject venom into the victim.

Statistics from [National Ag Safety Database](#)

Venomous Snakes in Texas

There are two types of venomous snakes found in Texas. First, pit vipers are the most common type of venomous snakes in Texas and include the copperhead, cottonmouth and rattlesnake. Pit vipers get their name from the infrared radiation receptors located in a "pit" on each side of the snake's face. Additionally, pit viper pupils are vertically elliptical and they have a single row of scales located on the underside of their tail.



The second type of venomous snake found in Texas is the coral snake. Coral snakes are members of a group of snakes called Elapids that are characterized by having a short, permanently erect fang located along each side of the upper-jaw. However, the coral snake does not have to "chew" its victim to inflict a painfully venomous bite. The Texas Coral Snake is the only member of the Elapids that is found in Texas and can easily be identified by the red, yellow and black color bands along the snake's body. The Texas Coral Snake is the only snake in Texas with touching red and yellow bands.

Symptoms of Envenomation by Snakes

There are many biological and environmental factors that determine the quantity and toxicity of an individual's snake's venom. People also react differently (immunologically) to snake venom. It is difficult to identify a set of standard symptoms for snake bite victims because of these variations. Listed below are some symptoms that many victims of snake bites share, but remember that not every victim will have all of these symptoms.

Common Symptoms of Snake Bite

- blurred vision
- convulsions

- dizziness
- excessive sweating
- fainting
- fang marks
- fever
- increased salivation
- localized pain and burning
- muscle contractions
- muscle incoordination
- nausea and vomiting
- numbness and tingling
- rapid pulse rate
- skin discoloration
- swelling in the bite area
- thirst
- tissue death
- weakness

First Aid for Snake Bite Victims

If someone has been bitten by a venomous snake, it is important to seek medical attention promptly. Call 9-1-1 or the Texas Poison Center Network at 1-800-222-1222 for information about which medical centers in your area have the appropriate antivenom. If possible call ahead to the medical center so the antivenom can be ready when the victim arrives.



It is also important to identify the kind of snake that bit the victim. Even taking a dead snake with you to the medical center is appropriate if it can be done without further risk or injury. Extreme caution should be used when bringing in a snake because even though the snake may be dead, its reflexes may still allow the snake to bite.

What to do for snake bite victims.

- Move the victim safely away from the snake. If you see the snake, try to remember what it looks like or take a digital picture of it if you can do so without putting yourself at risk. This will aid the doctor in determining which antivenin is needed.
- Do not attempt to capture the snake; however if the snake is dead, place it in a suitable container and bring it with you to the hospital for identification. Be careful to avoid contact with the dead snake's head however, as it may be able to bite reflexively for a short time after death.
- Keep the victim, and yourself, calm.
- Remove jewelry or constricting clothing from the victim quickly, before any swelling begins.

- Lift the bitten limb so that it is level with the heart. Raising it above heart level could hasten distribution of the venom to other parts of the body. Holding the limb below heart level could lead to increased swelling of the affected limb.
- Limit movement of the bitten limb and avoid any unnecessary exertion by bringing transport to the victim, if possible.
- Gently wash the bite wound with soap and water, if available.
- Call 911 if available and seek medical attention immediately. If you are transporting the victim to a hospital, call ahead so that the medical staff can prepare the antivenin for administration upon arrival.

What **NOT** to do for Snake Bite Victims

- **Do not** attempt to suck venom from the bite wound.
- **Do not** make cuts over the snake bite. This often leads to more tissue trauma and damage.
- **Do not** apply a tourniquet or other constricting device.
- **Do not** apply a cold pack or ice to the snake bite.
- **Do not** apply an electrical shock to the snake bite.
- **Do not** take pain reliever or other medications unless instructed to do so by a physician.
- **Do not** drink alcoholic beverages.
- **Do not** administer antivenom in the field. Treatment for snake bites is best conducted in an appropriate medical facility.

Snake Bite Prevention

- Although most snakes in Texas are not venomous, avoid handling or playing with snakes unless you have been properly trained.
- Keep landscape or campsite well-manicured.
- Wear long pants and boots when in areas known to have snakes.
- Watch where you step and place your hands when outdoors. Do not place them in areas where snakes may be resting unless you can see it is safe.

More Information

- http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/junior_naturalists/snakebit.phtml
- http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/junior_naturalists/moresnakes.phtml
- <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/species/southerncopperhead/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nasd/docs/as31600.html>
- <http://www.kingsnake.com/venom/>
- [The Venomous Snakes of Texas Health Service Region 6/5 South](#)

Common Venomous Snakes Found in Meadowlakes

Identification

Western Diamond Back Rattlesnake-have distinctive diamond pattern running the length of the snake's body which helps camouflage the snake and when threaten the snake coils and vibrates it rattles at the tip of its tail.



Broad Banded Copperhead-has deep reddish brown cross bands that are equally wide as they are long and has grayish-green or turquoise tip on its tail.



Western Cottonmouth or water moccasin-are dark, grayish-brown with little or no markings old cottonmouths may be entirely black.



Remember

- ❖ **Avoid handling or playing with any type of snake even though most snakes are not venomous unless you are properly trained to identify the type of snake assume it is venomous.**
- ❖ **Keep your lawn and landscape area well-maintain and manicured.**
- ❖ **Wear long pants and boots in areas of known snakes and watch where you are stepping or placing your hands outdoors.**
- ❖ **If bitten call 911 immediately a bite from a venomous snake is and medical emergency, if at all possible identify the snake even if it involves exterminating it and taking it the hospital with you.**