

Venomous snakes found in the United States include rattlesnakes, copperheads, cottonmouths/water moccasins, and coral snakes. A venomous bite is called an “envenomation.” Although death from venomous snake bites is rare, a worker with a severe envenomation or allergy to snake venom can die from a venomous bite.

Each year, an estimated 7,000–8,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes in the United States, and about 5 of those people die. The number of deaths would be much higher if people did not seek medical care.

Workers are far more likely to suffer long-term injuries from snake bites than to die from them. For those bitten by rattlesnakes, 10–44 percent will have lasting injuries.

The national average incidence of venomous snake bites in the United States is roughly 4 bites per 100,000 persons, and about 5 deaths per year total (1 death per 65 million people).



Snake Bites

What do you do next?

Employer Recommendations

Employers should protect their workers from venomous snake bites by training them about:

- their risk of being bitten by venomous snakes,
- how to identify venomous snakes,
- how to prevent snake bites, and
- what they should do if they see a snake or if a snake bites them.

Worker Recommendations

Workers should take these steps to prevent a snake bite:

- Do not touch or handle any snake.
- Stay away from tall grass and piles of leaves when possible.
- Avoid climbing on rocks or piles of wood where a snake may be hiding.
- Be aware that snakes tend to be most active at dawn and dusk and in warm weather.
- Wear boots and long pants when working outdoors. Even denim jeans may prevent some, although not all, bites by smaller snakes.
- Wear leather gloves when handling brush/debris.

Symptoms

Signs or symptoms of a snake bite may vary depending on the type of snake, but may include:

- Puncture marks at the wound
- Redness, swelling, bruising, bleeding, or blistering around the bite
- Severe pain and tenderness at the site of the bite
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Labored breathing
- Rapid heart rate, weak pulse, low blood pressure
- Disturbed vision
- Metallic, mint, or rubber taste in the mouth
- Increased salivation and sweating
- Numbness or tingling around face and/or limbs
- Muscle twitching

First Aid

Workers should take these steps if a snake bites them:

- Seek medical attention as soon as possible.
 - Antivenom is the treatment for serious snake envenomation. The sooner antivenom can be started, the sooner irreversible damage from venom can be stopped.
 - Driving oneself to the hospital is not advised because people with snakebites can become dizzy or pass out.
- Take a photograph of the snake from a safe distance if possible. Identifying the snake can help with treatment.
- Keep calm.
- Inform your supervisor.
- Apply first aid while waiting for EMS staff to get you to the hospital.
 - Lay or sit down with the bite in a neutral position of comfort.
 - Remove rings and watches before swelling starts.
 - Wash the bite with soap and water.
 - Cover the bite with a clean, dry dressing.
 - Mark the leading edge of tenderness/swelling on the skin and write the time alongside it.

Do NOT do any of the following:

- Do not pick up the snake or try to trap it.
- Do not wait for symptoms to appear if bitten, get medical help right away.
- Do not apply a tourniquet.
- Do not slash the wound or cut it in any way.
- Do not try to suck out the venom.
- Do not apply ice or immerse in water.
- Do not drink alcohol as a painkiller.
- Do not take pain relievers.
- Do not apply electric shock or folk therapies.