



Snake Bite – Australia only – Not US or Asia!

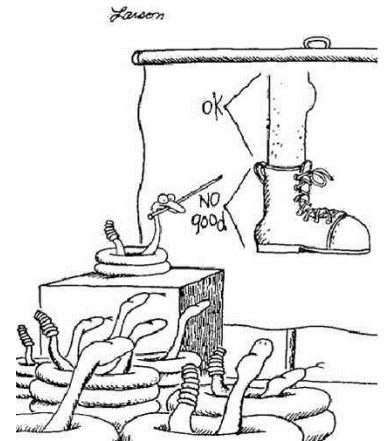
This also applies to Funnel web and Mouse spider, Blue-ringed octopus and the Cone shell (but see the fact sheet on those two!).

Australia has 20 species of snake that are highly dangerous to humans. Brown snakes have been the biggest cause of death. Not all snakes are poisonous and many bites are 'dry' (they deliver no venom).....however

ALL SNAKEBITES MUST BE TREATED AS LIFE-THREATENING

What is it

All Australian snakes have short fangs so the 'bite' is subcutaneous. Toxins in the snake venom are transported by the lymphatic system. Body movement activates the lymph system which in turn will speed up the spread of the venom.



Signs and Symptoms of a snake bite

It's easy to miss a snake bite (can be mistaken for a twig snapping and flicking your leg) and symptoms may not appear for an hour or more.

- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea
- Headache, double or blurred vision
- Generalised weakness, stiffness and aching, developing paralysis
- Tongue feels thick, breathing difficulties, signs of lack of oxygen (skin colour from blue to cherry red, blue lips)
- Respiratory and/or cardiac arrest



KNOW What to do

- Be ready to follow DRSABCD (Send for help – 000)
- Do NOT move the casualty – bring help to them
- Get them to lie down and keep still – calm and reassure
- Do NOT wipe off the venom – leave it there for later testing. (Avoid getting venom on you)
- Apply pressure Immobilisation bandage (ideally with a heavy crepe bandage) over the bite site. Do not remove clothing.
- Then bandage firmly from the tips of the fingers or toes (leaving nails free to check) and continue as high up the limb as you can go.
- Mark the bite site
- Check for blood flow (capillary return). Do this by pressing the nail (or underside of nail if wearing nail polish). It will initially turn white and then colour should return within 5-7 seconds – if not, you have done it too tight and restricted the blood flow
- Immobilise the casualty with comfortable splints or legs tied together
- Note the time of the bite, any description of the snake and stay with them