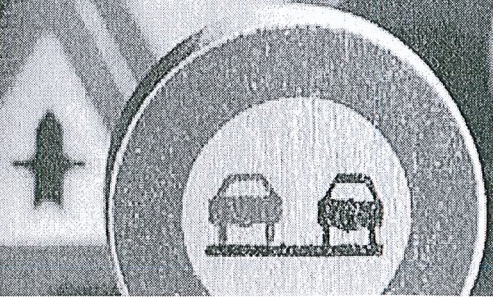


USafe SAFETY TOPIC

safety happens when you take responsibility



Snakes

Although most people fear snakes, snakebites are not common in Australia. However, Australia's snakes are the most poisonous in the world and – because it is difficult to assess how much venom has been injected – all snakebites must be treated as life threatening. Care must be taken in the bush, in rural areas & also urban areas close to grassland, bushland and rivers.

Venom injected into our blood stream can work rapidly* because it circulates quickly around the body. However, as long as a casualty remains still and calm, most general effects of snakebites can be slow in onset. In treating snake bites, it is important to slow the movement of venom around the body by using a pressure immobilisation bandage. Venom can affect breathing, circulation and central nervous system – death may result if medical aid is not sought immediately. If competent, be prepared to give Expired Air Resuscitation or Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation.

Snakebite

Snakes are not normally aggressive & tend to bite only when threatened or mishandled. As it is not always possible to identify the type of snake, all snakebites must be treated as potentially lethal & medical aid sought immediately.

* Most bites inject venom into muscle or fat, from which it is slowly taken up in the blood stream via the lymphatic system. If injected into a vein, impact is more severe & sudden.

Signs & Symptoms

Signs are not always visible & symptoms may only start to appear an hour or more after the person has been bitten. Signs & symptoms include:

- * Puncture marks or scratches
- * Nausea, vomiting & diarrhoea
- * Headache
- * Double or blurred vision
- * Drooping eyelids
- * Breathing difficulties
- * Drowsiness, giddiness, faintness
- * Problems speaking or swallowing
- * Pain in chest or abdomen
- * Respiratory weakness or arrest



The spread of snake venom is dependent on its absorption through our lymphatic system – & the speed of venom spread will be slowed if the casualty remains still.

Management of a snakebite

- ▶ Follow **DR ABC**
- ▶ Rest & calm the casualty
- ▶ Apply a pressure bandage
- ▶ Splint the bandaged limb
- ▶ Monitor breathing & circulation – be prepared to give CPR
- ▶ Seek urgent medical aid – bring transport to casualty or carry casualty to transport

WARNING

- ✗ **Do not** wash venom off the skin - retained venom will assist identification.
- ✗ **Do not** cut the bitten area.
- ✗ **Do not** try to suck venom out of the wound.
- ✗ **Do not** use a constrictive bandage (**NO TOURNIQUET'S!!!**).
- ✗ **Do not** try to catch the snake.

Preventing snakebites

- ✓ Make a lot of noise & always wear shoes when walking in the bush.
- ✗ Don't put your hands into hollow logs (or pipes).
- ✗ Don't reach into long grass or pickup a 'stick' unless you've checked it carefully.
- ✓ Look and check where you place your hands.
- ✓ Teach children to keep clear of snakes.
- ✓ Be extremely wary of all snakes & do not try to catch snakes – most bites occur this way!

If you have any safety queries or concerns please see your Supervisor or site HSSE contact immediately.

Contact Details: