

Snake Bites

All Snake bites should be treated as life threatening. Medical Assistance should be called as a matter of urgency. If untreated, this medical emergency may lead to death in the patient.

Caution

The area surrounding a snake bite should not be washed as it may assist medical staff in identifying the type of snake bite.

Signs and Symptoms

- Pain at the bite site
- Puncture marks or parallel scratches on the skin
- Anxiety
- Pale, cool skin or Sweating
- Rapid, weak pulse
- Rapid, shallow breathing or breathing difficulties
- Blurred vision
- Difficulty swallowing and speaking
- Abdominal pain, nausea and possible vomiting
- Headache, collapse and possible death if untreated

Treatment

- Call 000
- Keep the person who has been bitten as still as possible. If possible, lie the patient down to prevent walking or moving around.
- Apply a firm bandage over the bitten area (preferably use a wide elasticised bandage if available)
- Then bandage the entire limb (fingers to shoulder or toes to the hip) - the bandage should be as tight as for a sprained ankle.
- Keep still await the arrival of the ambulance for transport to the emergency department of the nearest hospital.
- Immobilise the limb with a splint and do not move the patient
- If the bite is on the trunk, apply pressure to the bite area
- Record the time that the bandage was applied and wait with the patient until advanced medical assistance arrives.

