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AS THE WEATHER WARMS UP RATTLESNAKES COME OUT TO ENJOY THE SUN JUST AS CALIFORNIANS DO

The California Poison Control System Warns that Snake Bites are Becoming More Powerful and Severe Reactions Have Increased

San Francisco, CA (April 29, 2009)—As the weather gets warmer people become more active outdoors, rattlesnake also come out to enjoy the sun. Snakes live all over California and while most are not poisonous, the rattlesnake is very dangerous. The California Poison Control System (CPCS) receives nearly 300 calls each year about rattlesnake bites. A rattlesnake bite can produce swelling and bruising and can be fatal, especially in children and pets because they are smaller. Most bites occur between the months of April and October, with the greatest number of bites in May.

“Over the past couple of years we have seen an increase in powerful snake bites

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and patient reactions to the bites have become more severe," said Richard F. Clark, MD, Executive Medical Director for the CPCS and Director of the Division of Medical Toxicology at the University of California, San Diego. "It is important for Californians to take extra precautions as they start to head outside, particularly with children and pets as their natural curiosity could create a deadly encounter with a rattlesnake."

To protect against rattlesnake bites, the CPCS provides the following tips:

- Keep children and pets close by when outdoors
- Wear boots or covered footwear when walking through wild areas
- Stay on trails when hiking, and look and listen carefully where you step
- Do not pick up or disturb a snake, even if it appears dead
- Do not reach into holes, bushes or anywhere that is hidden

If bitten, symptoms of a severe bite include:

- Extreme pain and swelling at the location of the bite
- Excessive bleeding
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Swelling in the mouth and throat making it difficult to breathe
- Lightheadedness
- Collapse and shock

If bitten by a rattlesnake immediate medical treatment is critical, and the CPCS provides the following tips:

- Call California Poison Control System at 1-800-222-1222 for fast, free and expert medical advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- The CPCS can help determine if you need to go to the emergency room
- Do not apply ice, use a tourniquet or try to suck out the venom
- Keep the wounded area still
- Move slowly, do not run

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The California Poison Control System is always available at 1-800-222-1222, for immediate expert help and information in case of rattlesnake bite and all other poison exposures. Certified pharmacists, nurses, medical toxicologists and Poison Information Providers are ready to help all Californian's. The service is free and confidential, and interpreters for over 100 languages are always available.

The CPCS has four Divisions located at UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, San Francisco General Hospital in San Francisco, Children's Hospital Central California in Fresno/Madera and the UC San Diego Medical Center in San Diego. The CPCS is part of the University of California San Francisco School of Pharmacy and responsible to the California Emergency Medical Services Authority.

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