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California Poison Control Warns Residents about Snake Bites

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(<http://www.calpoison.org>) reminds Californians that rattlesnakes are waking up from hibernation, and even baby snakes possess dangerous venom as soon as they hatch. A rattlesnake bite can produce painful swelling, bruising, tissue destruction, bleeding problems, and in rare cases, can be fatal. Most bites occur between the months of April and October. (Click this link to hear the sound a rattlesnake makes <http://bit.ly/kjJF23>).

“While the odds of being bitten by a rattlesnake are slim compared to other environmental injuries (about 300 cases per year in California), by following some precautions outdoors, people can minimize the chance of being bitten,” says Dr. Cyrus Rangan, Assistant Medical Director for the CPCS. He added that children are naturally curious, and may look into open pipes and loose brush, or under rocks and bushes, where snakes may sometimes lie quietly. Children need to be carefully supervised outside, especially in wooded and desert areas where snakes tend to live. Remember, that rattlesnakes do not always make a rattling sound, so you may be standing next to a rattlesnake and not even know it. Some snake bite prevention tips include:

- Wear boots and long pants when hiking.
- Stay on trails when hiking, away from underbrush and tall weeds.
- Do not touch or disturb a snake, even if it appears dead.
- Carefully inspect logs or rocks before sitting on them.
- Never hike alone in remote areas. Always have someone with you who can assist in an emergency.
- Teach children to respect snakes and to leave them alone.

(more)

Dr. Rangan says the symptoms of a rattlesnake bite may include extreme pain and swelling at the location of the bite; excessive bleeding; nausea; swelling in the mouth and throat making it difficult to breathe; lightheadedness; drooling; and even collapse and shock in rare cases.

“If you are bitten by a rattlesnake, immediate medical attention is critical,” Dr. Rangan said.

“Severe, or even life-threatening symptoms may occur in any patient, within minutes after the bite, or in other cases may begin after couple of hours. In either event, your best bet is to get to a hospital as soon as you can.” He added that the following steps are important for any rattlesnake bite:

- Get immediate medical attention.
- Do not apply ice, do not use a tourniquet or constricting band, do not try to suck out the venom, and do not use any device to cut or slice the bite site.
- Keep calm, and keep the affected extremity elevated during transport to a medical facility.

Many veterinarians now carry rattlesnake anti-venom and rattlesnake vaccines for dogs and other pets that are bitten. Contact your veterinarian for more information.

About CPCS

You can learn more about a variety of poison issues by following CPCS on Facebook at <http://on.fb.me/iS6S7J> and on Twitter @poisoninfo. Sign up for weekly safety text messages to your cell phone by texting TIPS to 69866; and download a free iPhone app, *Choose Your Poison*, at <http://bit.ly/gg9vfG>. CPCS is dedicated to providing residents with the most up-to-date information and 24-hour help in case of poisoning. In case of an accidental poisoning, consumers should immediately call 1-800-222-1222 for advice. Pharmacists, nurses, physician-toxicologists and poison information providers are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to help. In most cases, a poison exposure can be safely managed in your home, avoiding a call to 911 or a visit to a crowded hospital emergency room. Many parents think about contacting the poison control services only in case of an emergency, but experts are available to answer questions any time.

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