

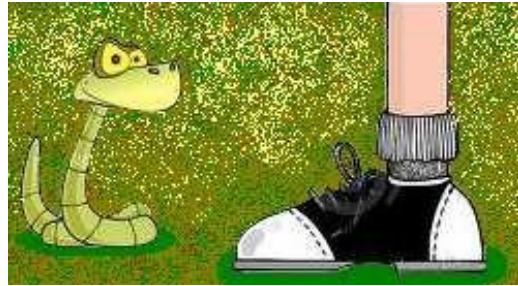
Warning!
Content not for sensitive viewers

Snake bite Prevention



Wear protective clothing

Picture sourced from Reference B



Don't put your hands underneath objects in the field

Don't try handle snakes

Picture sourced from Reference A



Stand still

Shield eyes

Picture sourced from Reference B



Picture sourced from Reference B



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Snake bite

First aid



If someone is bitten by a snake:

- Take the person to hospital as soon as possible to be treated by a doctor.
- A level 2 First Aider may bandage the patient in the car on the way to the hospital.

What NOT to do



Warning!
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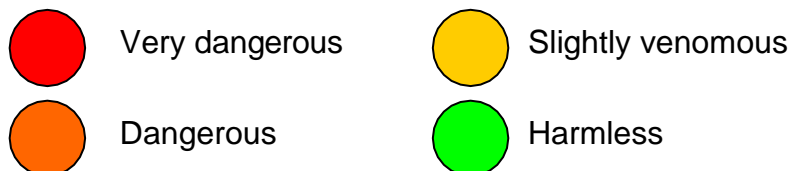
Snake bite classification



Every snake has been classified according to whether it is dangerous or not.

Below are the different colours that indicate the classification:

Snake classification



Not all snakes are poisonous and dangerous, and they are ALWAYS more afraid of us than we are of them.

It is NOT necessary to kill all snakes.

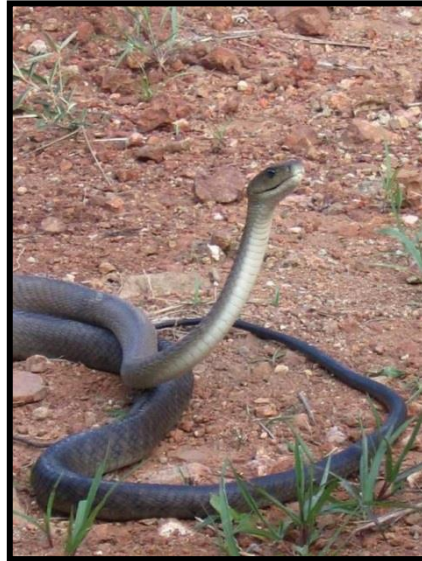
Black mamba



Very dangerous

Identification:

- coffin-shaped head, black mouth lining
- grey to olive-brown colour on back
- light grey-green belly.



Behaviour:

- will rear up
- hiss and spread a narrow hood in defence
- usually with open mouth to show black interior.

Average length: 2 m

Reaction:

- allow the snake to move away
- If it does not, then slowly retreat while watching the snake.



Boomslang



Very dangerous

Identification:

- very large eyes in relation to its head
- females and juveniles
 - light brown
- males
 - uniformly bright green, black, and yellow
 - green with black-edged scales.



Average length: 1, 3 m

Mostly active during the day in trees.

Behaviour:

- If threatened, it will inflate its throat or whole body to look bigger.

Reaction:

If encountered, stand still, the snake will move away rapidly.



Cape cobra



Very dangerous

Identification:

- colour
 - yellow to orange-brown.

Behaviour:

- when the cobra is agitated, it spreads its hood
- the snake does not spit but it is venomous
- It is territorial and readily defends itself by biting.



Average length: 1, 4 m

Reaction:

- If encountering Cape cobra, remain still until the snake moves off



Mozambique spitting cobra



Very dangerous

Identification:

- grey to olive-brown
- A black edge on each scale, while the belly is pink to yellowish
- The throat has black bars or blotches.



Average length: 1,2m

Behaviour:

- mostly nocturnal but will bask during the day
- It will spread a hood if threatened and does spit venom.

Reaction:

- If encountered, stand still and shield your eyes so that you cannot see the snake's head.
- Back away slowly.





Puff adder



Very dangerous

Identification:

- a very thick snake
- broad triangular flattened head
- mostly brown with a shade of yellow or grey markings
- Dark, arrow-shaped markings with light edges occur regularly on the back.



Average length: 90 cm

Behaviour:

- slow moving and very bad tempered
- Will hiss loudly when it is disturbed.

Reaction:

- Most bites occur when snake is stepped on as it is not easily seen due to its camouflage.
- If encountered, move away slowly



Rinkhals



Very dangerous

Identification:

- short stocky snake
- colour is usually dull black, olive to dark brown
- White crossbars on the throat.

Average length: 1 m

Behaviour:

- will rear up and spread a broad hood when threatened and it spits venom
- Common in grasslands.

Reaction:

- If encountered, stand still and shield your eyes so that you cannot see the snake's head and back away slowly.
- Sometimes it will "play dead". Never pick up a snake that looks dead.



Snouted cobra



Very dangerous

Identification:

- large thick cobra with a broad head
- yellowish to grey brown
- sometimes dark above while mostly yellow with dark blotches below
- Normally has a dark band on the throat.



Average length: 1, 8

m

Behaviour:

- will spread a big broad hood and hiss when threatened
- It does not spit.

Reaction:

- When encountered, stand still and slowly back away if it does not.





Twig snake



Very dangerous

Identification:

- cryptically coloured, snake (1 m in length) looks like a thin branch of a tree
- it is pale grey with dark and light blotches on the back while the top of the head is mostly dull green
- it is very thin and had a very long tail
- The eyes have keyhole-shaped pupils and the tongue is bright orange red with a black tip.



Although it is active during the day in trees and shrubs, it is not often seen.

If it is threatened, it will inflate its neck and display its bright tongue.

Reaction:

- If encountered, back away slowly.



Burrowing asp



Dangerous

A short (35 cm in length), shiny, black snake with a white or black belly.

The head is not distinct from its neck and it has tiny eyes. The tail ends in a spine.



This burrowing snake is usually found during excavations, and bites are unlikely to occur if the snake is left alone to retreat when encountered.



Common night adder



Dangerous

It can be recognised by the well-defined V-shaped marking on the back of the head and square markings along the back.

Markings are either black over grey, or dark brown over light brown.

It is almost strictly nocturnal.

It is a comparatively placid snake but can put on a show of great ferocity.

The venom is mildly cytotoxic (cell-destroying).

Bites result in only minimal swelling with painful enlargement of the glands in the affected limb. Symptoms disappear after a few days.



Southern African Python



Dangerous

The Southern African python has a dark brown body with dark speckling and grey or brown blotches and an arrowhead marking on its head.

The underside is white to dirty white with dark blotches.

This snake has an average length of 4 m but has been recorded as growing up to 6 m.

Although non-venomous, pythons are dangerous because of powerful teeth which can cause tissue damage so severe that stitches may be needed



Black-headed snake



(Cape centipede eater)



Slightly venomous

The black-headed centipede eater can be identified by its distinctive black head and collar, its small thin body and strictly nocturnal lifestyle.

It grows to an average length of 30 cm and a maximum length of 40 cm.

Exclusively eats centipedes.

Although venomous, it is not thought to be dangerous to man and due to the small size of its teeth it is unable to pierce the skin when biting.





Olive grass snake



Slightly venomous

A large, robust snake with a non-flattened snout and a long tail.

The back is olive-brown (paler towards the tail), sometimes with black-edged scales, forming thin black lines or with scattered black flecks on the forebody.



The belly is white-yellow

It occasionally eats other snakes, even young black mambas.

It grows to between 1, 2 m and 1, 4 m long.

Its venom may cause nausea and pain.



Red-lipped or Herald snake



Slightly venomous

They are 70 cm long with a dark patch or line in the temporal region.

The body is olive or grey green with white speckles

When hassled, they flatten the head into the typical adder triangular shape displaying the red lips. Misidentification results in them being killed.



When threatened, they coil back, often with the mouth open, striking out and hissing repeatedly.

They are fairly aggressive when first encountered.

Although the species is semi-venomous, it is not lethal to man.



Stripe-bellied Sand snake



Slightly venomous

The Western stripe-bellied sand snake can be identified by its slender head, large eyes, yellow underside, and the stripes down the length of its body.

It has a strictly diurnal lifestyle.

It grows to an average length of 1 m and a maximum length of 1, 4 m.

Although venomous, is not dangerous to man.



Spotted or Rumberic Skaapsteker



Slightly venomous

This is a medium-sized snake with a head that is not very distinct from the body.

The interior part of the body has a row of dark brown, round spots down each side on a grey to olive brown background.

There is a similar row of spots on the back. They are alert, somewhat nervous, snakes that are capable of rapid movement on a hot day.

They are easily managed but may bite if restrained.

They have weak venom that does not cause any medically important symptoms.



Tiger snake



Slightly venomous

Identification:

- Banded, dark brown above with a yellow to olive belly.

Average length: 1, 5

m

Behaviour:

- Will attack if they are disturbed or threatened.

They are often territorial and will live in the same area for years.





Brown house snake



Harmless

Identification:

- has an obvious head
- small body scales
- uniform red-brown colour
- large, old snakes are darker, almost black
- Two pale yellow streaks on the side of the head.

Average length: 120 cm

Non-venomous snakes





Cape wolf snake



Harmless

Identification:

- flattened head,
- colouration
 - uniform dark brown to black
 - sometimes scales are white-tipped
 - White or black speckled belly.



Average length: 50 cm.

The snake is nocturnal.

It is not venomous and harmless.





Common slug eater



Harmless

Identification:

- colour varies
 - olive green to brown or rust back
 - grey sides
 - a yellowish or cream belly.

Non-venomous.

Not dangerous to man.

It is not likely to bite.



Common or Rhorneic Egg eater



 Harmless

Identification

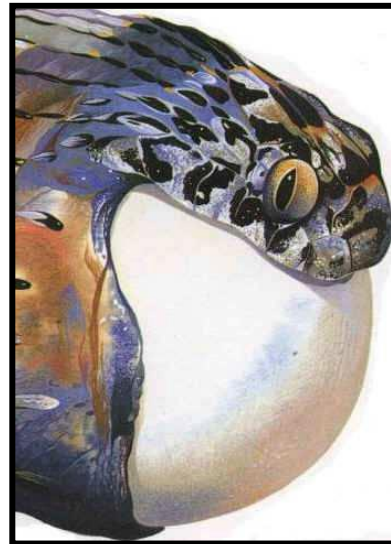
- colours mainly brown and yellow
- arrow markings, dark brown on brown snakes and white on white snakes
- Black-lined mouth and rarely hits their target.



Behaviour:

- May appear very aggressive and coil with head into centre.

Harmless due to lack of teeth.





Mole snake



Harmless

Identification:

- yellow, brown, or grey
- body same colour everywhere
- looks like a Cape cobra
- Sometimes hisses when cornered.

Average length: 2 m.

Habitat: rodent tunnels.

This snake is found all over South Africa and is often mistaken for a Cape cobra and killed.

Can cause a lacerating bite.



Spotted or variegated snake

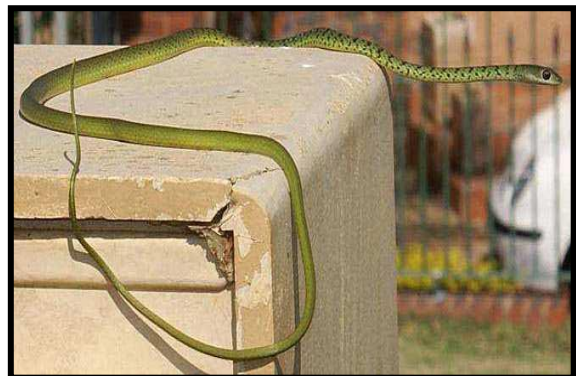


Harmless

Identification:

- black speckling
- gold or orange eyes
- Blue tongue with black tip.

Average length: 90 cm.



References



A: EWT-Eskom Wildlife & Power Line Interaction Training Manual

B: Amy Harington (HaringA@eskom.co.za)