

Welcome to

Majuba Refurbishment

Projects

Snake Awareness



There is often confusion regarding whether snakes, scorpions and spiders are referred to as being “venomous” or “poisonous”...

They are always referred to as “venomous”.

Venomous is defined as “secreting venom; capable of injecting venom by means of a bite or sting” whereas

Poisonous is defined as “(of a substance or plant) causing or capable of causing death or illness if taken into the body.”

This means that venom is injected into the body, while poison is absorbed through the skin or by means of ingestion.



VENOM:

Neurotoxic: Attacks the nervous system (suppresses breathing & heart function, paralysis, muscle cramps etc.);

Cytotoxic: Attacks cell membranes (major swelling of tissue, severe pain, severe damage to organs);

Haemotoxic: Breaks down blood cells & body tissue (affects major organs, may cause internal and external bleeding).

Consequences of cytotoxic venom:



Snakes – Signs & symptoms of a bite

You may not immediately realize that you have been bitten by a snake – look out for the following signs and symptoms that may occur:

1. Two puncture marks with swelling and redness around the wound;
2. Nausea and vomiting;
3. Difficulty breathing, with a rapid pulse;
4. Numbness or tingling sensation in fingers and toes;
5. Blurry vision and light-headedness;
6. Diarrhoea;
7. Convulsions

Snakes – what to look for?

If you do manage to see the snake that bit you or your colleague, focus on the following:

- Colour and scales/skin (e.g. shiny small scales, big rough scales etc.);
- Size and stature (e.g. long and thin, short and stocky, head distinct from body or hooded etc.);
- Pattern (e.g. no pattern, random dark blotches, striped etc.);
- Eyes/pupils (e.g. round, horizontal, vertical);
- Any distinctive features/behaviours (e.g. colour of inside of mouth, hissing/puffing, upper body raised off the ground etc.).

Note: An accurate description of the snake will help those treating the victim in identifying the snake and, subsequently, administering the correct anti-venom.

Snakes – the does and don't when you see one

What to do	What not to do
Get yourself (and any other people/pets) out of harm's way by slowly moving away from the snake – sudden movements may cause it to strike/flee.	Do not panic – this will only make things worse as you are then bound to act Irrationally.
Keep an eye on the snake from a safe distance and try to identify it if possible.	Do not attempt to kill it – you will only put yourself in unnecessary danger.
Phone the registered snake catcher to come and remove the snake – provide as much information as possible regarding the situation at hand.	Do not attempt to catch it yourself – even if the snake is not venomous, it can still hurt you, or you might end up injuring or aggravating the snake.
Observe the situation until the snake catcher arrives, then keep your distance to allow the catcher to perform his duties safely.	Do not interfere or try and assist the snake catcher unless specifically requested to do so.

Snakes – the does and don't when bitten by one

What to do	What not to do
Get away from the snake if safe to do so and try to identify the snake (take a photo with your cell phone if possible).	Don't panic – panicking will only make it worse as heart-rate will increase, causing the venom to spread through your body even quicker.
Remove all jewellery and tight clothing and shoe before swelling starts.	Do not attempt to suck the venom from the wound – this is a myth and it will only make things worse as you are now ingesting the venom as well.
Get to the nearest hospital or clinic as soon as possible – phone an ambulance/emergency response company if nobody is around to take you to the hospital.	Do not apply an ice pack or tourniquet and under no circumstances should you try to cut the wound or attempt to remove the venom.
Position yourself, if possible, in such a way that the bite is at or below the level of your heart.	Avoid drinking caffeine or alcohol – this may increase the rate at which venom is absorbed.

Why not kill Snakes?

1. Snake venom is used for the production of anti-venom.
Unfortunately, the quantity of venom that can be milked at a time is very small, so snakes need to be milked many times to produce a useable amount of venom.
2. Snakes are nature's biological vermin control. Snakes keep rats, mice, frogs, insects and other animal populations under control, free of charge!
3. Snakes are part of the food chain – certain animals rely on eating snakes for nutrition and energy (think birds of prey, honey badgers, threatened species such as the pangolin and even other snakes). By taking out snakes, you are depriving other animals of their food source and, in doing so, adversely affecting the food chain and the natural order of things which ultimately impacts on human health and well-being.

Why not kill Snakes?

4. Every time a snake sheds its skin, the decomposition process of the skin returns nutrients back into the ecosystem. The shed skin may also be used for research purposes for products that will aid humans as it shows many similarities with the outermost layer of the human skin.
5. Apart from the obvious benefits of keeping snakes alive (as discussed above), attempting to kill a snake is dangerous – you may make a wrong move and the snake may end up biting you before you can kill it. You may also, even if inadvertently, end up causing the snake unnecessary pain and suffering while disposing of it and this in itself is a contravention of the National Animal Protection Act (No 71 of 1962).

Thank you