

FIRST AID FACT SHEET

Snake Bite

Snake bites are not common in Australia, but all should be treated as life threatening. Snakes force venom out under pressure through fangs in the upper jaw. The spread of snake venom depends on its absorption through the lymphatic system.

Caused by

- + Fangs puncturing the skin.

Signs & symptoms

- + Visible in an hour or more after the person has been bitten.
- + In children signs and symptoms may appear within minutes.
- + Puncture marks or scratches, may bleed.
- + Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.
- + Headache, drowsiness, giddiness or faintness.
- + Double or blurred vision, drooping eyelids.
- + Voice changes, trouble speaking or swallowing.
- + Pain or tightness in the throat, chest or abdomen.
- + Breathing difficulties, respiratory weakness or arrest.

What to do

1. Follow DRSABCD St John Action Plan.
2. Lay the casualty down, rest and reassure.
3. If the bite is on a limb, apply a broad pressure bandage over the bite site as soon as possible.
4. Then apply a further elasticised or firm bandage - start at fingers or toes and move up the limb as far as can be reached. Apply tightly but without stopping blood flow.
5. Splint the limb including the joints on either side of the bite.
6. Ensure the casualty does not move.
7. Urgent medical aid. Call **Triple Zero (000)** for an ambulance.
8. Write down the time that the casualty was bitten and when the bandage was applied.

DO NOT

- + Wash the venom off the skin (it may aid in identification).
- + Cut the bitten area and try to suck venom out of the wound.
- + Use a tourniquet.
- + Try and catch the snake.



In a medical emergency
call **Triple Zero (000)**

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Information provided is as per Australian Resuscitation Council Guidelines. These first aid protocols are for the Australian market only. All care has been taken in preparing this information but St John takes no responsibility for its use. This information is not a substitute for practical first aid training with St John.