



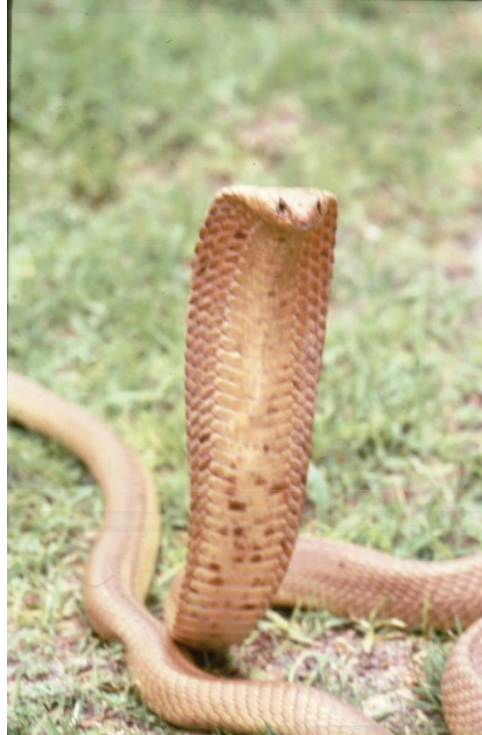
INITIAL PRE-HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT OF SNAKE BITE



- Before leaving on a hike, climbing, mountain biking or camping trip, find out where the nearest medical facility is and note the telephone number.
- In the case of a snake bite, get the patient to a medical facility as soon as possible. Phone ahead to notify them of the arrival of a snake bite victim. Note that, in most cases, you have a couple of hours before serious life-threatening symptoms manifest themselves.
- Immobilize the patient if possible. If alone, keep calm and do not walk too fast or run as this speeds up the distribution of the venom.
- Do not suck the bite site. Do not apply a tourniquet.
- ONLY in suspected neurotoxic bites (mamba, Cape cobra), is it recommended that you apply a wide crepe bandage firmly above the bite site (as tightly as for a sprained ankle) to slow the spread of venom to vital organs like the heart and lungs.
 - The life threatening neurotoxic effects of Mamba and Cape Cobra bites (such as difficulty in breathing) develop within 30 min to 4 hours. If you are more than 2 hrs away from medical assistance, respiratory support (e.g. mouth-to-mouth resuscitation) may be necessary.
- The life threatening effects of a cytotoxic snake bite (e.g. puff adder) develop late (6-24 hours).
- Comforting and reassuring the patient is a very important part of the first aid treatment.
- Try to get a good description of the snake.
- NOTE: Antivenom should only be administered by the trained medical staff in a medical facility.

Poison Information Helpline: 0861 555777

Tygerberg Poison Information Centre
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Stellenbosch University
www.sun.ac.za/poisoncentre



Neurotoxic venom – *Naja nivea* (Cape cobra)
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Cytotoxic venom - *Bitis arietans* (Puff adder)
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