Basic awareness of snakes and their bites & first aid remedies for snake bites

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Basic awareness of snakes and their bites & first aid remedies for snake bites

Samuel Kyabuntu

herpetology
Twig snake
The night adder, stiletto snake, horned adder, coral snake, garter snake are all regarded as minor culprits in snakebite, as death rarely results from these or these snakes are not regarded as deadly, or bites are unknown.

As with any snakebite, the victim should be taken to a nearest hospital for observation, even though the snake has been positively identified as a minor snake.

Treatment of the above bites are supportive and symptomatic.
Some easy rules to avoid dangerous snakebite in Africa

- Snakes with bars or bands around the body, could be Dangerous and should be avoided.
- Snakes with stripes down the length of the body are not regarded as deadly.
- A snake that rears up and makes a Hood, should be regarded as dangerous.
- Mouth gaping is used by some snakes, if a snake gapes the mouth, it’s better to avoid the snake as it could be a black mamba.
- Inflating the neck is used by a number of snakes, like boomslang, twig, so avoid them.
- Hissing is used by a number of snakes, especially puff adders, cobras, mambas. Heed their warnings.
RISK FACTORS IN SNAKEBITE

1. **season**
   - Snakebite occurs seasonally, as snakes are more active during the warmer, this is reflected in incidence of snakebites with data showing an increase in snakebites as the weather warms up.

2. **time of the Day**
   - Snakes may be active during the day (diurnal) or active during twilight of dawn or at night (nocturnal). This is important when you enter an area where you may come into contact with snakes, as you must be aware of these facts.

3. **Occupation**
   - It should be obvious that if you spend time in the bush because of your occupation, you will have more contact with snakes than a person working in the office. Many rural black females get bitten by snakes when snakes become active in the evening, and a Wire is busy around here Hutt collectent firme woods cooking the dinner.
4. leisure activity

City people like to have a break from the city and spend time in the bush. This could lead to problems if they are not aware of snakes. City dwellers may not wear adequate protective clothing, wanting to sunbathe.

5. Protective clothing and shoes

Wearing long trousers and shoes can reduce the incident of snakebite. From hospital data, 68% of snakebites are inflicted on the foot or ankle, and a further 10% on the leg below the knee, thus a total of 70% of bites are on lower leg. Full protection is only offered if fangs are unable to penetrate through the material.
Risk factors

6. Housing.

Factors affecting severity of snakebite

There are many factors that can affect the severity of snakebite, some of which are the following:

1. **Snake related factors:** the species of snake, the size and the condition of the snake, type of bite: full bite, glancing bite, single bite or scratch. The condition of the fangs, whether both fangs are intact and operating, or if one side is being replaced or have broken off. The condition under which the snake struck out—was annoyed or was the snake suddenly surprise? What time of the day was the bite sustained, what were the weather conditions like, was it hot or cold? Was the snake active or disturbed during hibernation?
Factors affecting the severity of snakebite

• 2. patient factors.

• Size, age, and health of the victim, a child will have a larger venom to body ratio and the bite will be more severe. The general health of the victim, is he/she in good health or has the immune system been compromised. Other health conditions that can adversely affect the outcome of snakebite could be a bad heart or poor lungs, or allergy disposition.
Factors affecting severity of snakebite

• 3. treatment.

What has the victim received? Was the treatment adequate or insufficient? Did any of the treatment aggrevate the situation? How long after the bite did the victim arrive at the hospital?

AVOIDING SNAKEBITE

1. Keep your home and garden clean
2. When walking in the bush
3. When camping
4. Leave snake alone
Snake venoms
Low molecular weight, medium molecular weight and large molecular weight snake venoms, and how this affects the first aid treatment.

1. Withdraw
2. Keep calm
3. Neurotoxine cobras

The venom is absorbed by the lymphatic system, so the less movement until proper first aid is in place; first aid could be an arterial tourniquet or pressure immobilization.
First aid remedies

4. mambas: the venom is absorbed by capillary bed into circulation; so, restrict movement until proper first aid is in place. Use an arterial tourniquet.  

the tourniquet should be tight enough to prevent inflow and out flow of any blood, as tight as a sprained ankle. 

Make note of the time you applied the tourniquet, do not keep it in place for more than 1.5h as permanent damage to the limb may be caused. Also note that the tourniquet is painful as all the blood and nerve vessels are compressed. Never use a tourniquet if you have identified that the snake is an adder or spitting cobra.
First aid remedies

5. Cytotoxic bites - Adders: movement in the cytotoxic will spread the venom from the injection site and thus minimize tissue damage, without increasing your risk of dying. Cytotoxic bites to the hands, fingers (puff adder, spitting cobra, stiletto) can cause severe tissue destruction and it is recommended that the bitten arm be elevated and that the hand and fingers be actively flexed and extended for about 5 minutes. This has the effect of spreading the venom away from the bite site causing the venom concentration to be diluted and reducing the amount of tissue damage.
First aid remedies for snakebite

6. The best first aid measure, that is common to all snakebite, is to transport the patient to a hospital ASAP. During the trip the victim should be reassured to reduce the level of anxiety, and support treatment given as the need arises.

If you are alone you will have to walk slowly to your vehicle and drive yourself to hospital, if possible, try to and stop somebody to assist you as you may faint at the steering wheel and cause an accident. Also phone to warn hospital for your arrival so that they can be ready for this.
first aid remedies for snakebite

Drive at normal speed or slower, as your reaction may be impaired from a neurotoxin and it will be worse if you have an accident. If you are helping a snakebite victim, do not speed as you may cause an accident and worsen the whole situation. Your help to transport a victim to medical help is the best thing for you to do. Do not wait or waist time, just get to hospital ASAP.
First aid for spitting cobra

• Venom in the eye is not life threatening and no antivenom need to be injected.

  1. Step away from the snake and turn your head to receive any additional spray on the cheek.

2. Keep your hands away from the eyes. Do not rub your eyes.

3. Wash the eyes out with water ASAP.

4. You can use anesthetic eye drops to ease the pain in the eyes, this may also be used before washing the eye as it eases the pain and makes it easier to irrigate the eyes.
• The venom of a young snake is as toxic as that of the adults, but the larger volume injected by adults usually causes a more severe reaction,
• Even a dead snake, or a snake’s head can bite and inject venom
• Leave snake alone, but be careful every where you are walking, and mainly those who walk at night, check where you are treading
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPECIES:</th>
<th>ID features</th>
<th>Fangs</th>
<th>Venom</th>
<th>Syndrome</th>
<th>First Aid</th>
<th>Habits</th>
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<td>Gaboon adder</td>
<td>Build, head, scale type &amp;</td>
<td>Fixed front,</td>
<td>Cyto; Neuro;</td>
<td>Painful, Progressive Swelling,</td>
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<td>appearance, distinctive</td>
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<td>Progressive Weakness, Bleeding.</td>
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