

Snakebite Awareness Training

Part 2: Lesson 8 - Recognizing The Symptoms Of Snakebite

Review questions for participants:

1. What are three reasons snakes use venom?
 2. What are the three ways that venom can affect your body?
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If you've been bitten by a venomous snake in Kenya you can call an emergency services number at +254 729403599 for additional help

Ok, so venom can affect your nerves, your cells and tissues, or your blood - or even some combination of these. It is important for you to recognize the ***symptoms*** of bites from a venomous snake, because those symptoms can help health care workers give you the proper kind of treatment for snakebites. Let's learn those symptoms.

Venoms that **affects your nerves** (non-spitting cobras, mambas, and tree snakes)

- Symptoms
 - You may feel very little pain near the bite marks
 - You may feel tingling of the skin near the bite
 - You may get dizzy and lose consciousness

- You may have droopy eyes and blurred vision
- Your muscles may start to twitch uncontrollably
- You may experience nausea and vomiting
- You may start to have trouble breathing and eventually stop breathing
 - If this is the case, someone will need to provide life support until you get treatment (See “A Few First Aid Tips for Snakebite”)

What do I do if I experience these symptoms after a snakebite?

- Move away from the snake into a shady area
 - Stay calm and still to slow the spread of venom
 - Make note of the time the bite occurred
 - Remove clothing from area of bite, as well as any jewelry
 - Apply pressure by one of these two methods (African Snakebite Institute):
 - Apply a cotton pad over the wound and bandage it onto the arm with a pressure bandage or cloth strips. See “A Few First Aid Tips for Snakebite”.
 - Loosely apply a pressure bandage by wrapping it from the end of the limb furthest away from the heart and wrapping toward the heart. See “A Few First Aid Tips for Snakebite”.
 - Mark the site of the bite on the pressure bandage so a doctor can quickly find it
 - Add a splint to the bandage to keep the affected limb from moving (see guidance on how to do this in another section of this training document)
 - Get to a hospital as soon as possible for medical treatment
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Venom that **affects your cells and tissues** (spitting cobras, adders, and vipers):

- Symptoms
 - The venom from these snakes destroys your cells and tissues
 - You will experience a great deal of pain and swelling at the site of the bite
 - You may also experience pain and swelling under your arms (lymph nodes)
 - You may see bruises under the skin and blisters on the skin
 - You may see watery blood seeping from the wound
 - You may experience low blood pressure and dizziness when walking or when you try to stand up
 - You may lose consciousness (faint)

What do I do if I experience these symptoms after a snakebite?

- Move away from the snake into a shady area
 - Stay calm and still to slow the spread of venom
 - Make note of the time the bite occurred
 - Remove clothing from area of bite, as well as any jewelry
 - Because these bites cause a lot of swelling, it is not advised to use a pressure bandage
 - Add a splint to the affected limb to keep it from moving. See the lesson on “A Few First Aid Tips for Snakebite”.
 - Get to a hospital as soon as possible for medical treatment
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For venom that will **affect my eyes** (spitting cobra):

- Symptoms
 - You will have a lot of pain in your eyes
 - Your eyes will get watery
 - You will likely lose your vision
 - Uncontrollable blinking or twitching in eye
 - Your eyes may swell to the point you cannot close them
 - The whites of your eyes may turn red
 - Your eyes may become sensitive to bright light

What do I do if I experience these symptoms after an encounter with a spitting cobra?

- Flush the eye out with an abundance of water, saline, or if necessary, milk for 5-10 minutes, making sure to rotate eye to get venom out of all parts of the eye
 - Tie a piece of cloth loosely over the eyes, and wear dark glasses if you have them
 - Do not rub your eyes
 - Go as fast as possible to the nearest hospital for treatment - the faster the treatment, the less likely you will be to lose your eyesight
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Venom that **affects your blood** (boomslang):

- Symptoms
 - The venom is slow-acting, so you may not experience the effects for many hours after the bite
 - The venom will thin your blood and allow it to flow freely - you may have uncontrolled internal or external bleeding
 - You may experience nausea, headache, and sleepiness

What do I do if I experience these symptoms after a snakebite?

- Get medical attention immediately, even if you do not feel any symptoms after a few hours
- Remain still and calm to slow the spread of the venom
- Remove rings or other jewelry or tight fitting clothing that could constrict if swelling occurs
- According to the African Snakebite Institute, you should NOT use a pressure bandage around the affected limb

TRAINER: Once you have gone through all of these symptoms, review it as many times as necessary to make sure people can recite to you the symptoms. Consider using a role play to act out what to do, or give them scenarios to assess their learning. Several of these scenarios are given in the ***“Learning Activities” section of this handbook.***