

Emergency Snakebite Action Plan¹

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In the unfortunate event that a child is bitten at school by a venomous snake, teachers and administrators should be prepared. We encourage schools to develop a plan of action and immediately initiate the plan if necessary.

As soon as a bite from a snake is suspected or confirmed, a teacher or administrator should:

1. **Call 911** and request that an ambulance be dispatched to the school.
2. Call the Poison Control Center's National Hotline at 1-800-222-1222, which will direct the call to the Poison Control Center nearest to you. The highly trained staff will give guidance on what steps need to be taken prior to the arrival of the ambulance. Provide the Poison Control Center with the name and phone number of the emergency room (ER) where the victim is being taken and request that the center have a toxicologist contact the ER. The Poison Control Center's toxicologists are trained on treatment of venomous snakebites and will consult with the ER doctor to ensure the victim receives the best care possible.
3. Contact the parents or other designated emergency contact person.



Figure 1. It is important to get a snakebite victim away from the snake as quickly as possible. It is not necessary to identify the snake—trying to catch or kill the snake will likely result in someone else being bitten. Credits: Steve A. Johnson, U.S. Geological Survey

On-site care for the victim includes several basic rules that should be followed:

DO!

- **Call 911 immediately!**
- Get the victim away from the snake.
- Immobilize the bite area if on an extremity and keep it lower than the victim's heart.

1. This document is WEC 200, one of a 4-part series of the Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Department entitled *Dealing with Venomous Snakes in Florida School Yards*, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date September 2005. Revised March 2009, June 2012, February 2016, and February 2020. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication. A CD/DVD set that includes PowerPoint presentations (with speaking notes) and other information on venomous snake safety is available from the UF/IFAS Extension Bookstore (<http://www.ifasbooks.ufl.edu>). For additional information, visit Dr. Johnson's website at <http://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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- Remove rings, bracelets, watches, or restrictive clothing on the extremity with the bite. Wash the area of the bite with soap and water.
- Keep the victim warm and as comfortable as possible, and offer reassurance.
- Keep a record of the time of the bite, the victim's symptoms, and any first aid measures. Be sure to give this information to emergency medical personnel. This will help the doctor and Poison Control Center toxicologist determine the severity of the bite and appropriate treatment.
- Be aware of any allergies (drug, food, animal) or existing medical conditions the victim may have.
- A positive identification of the snake is NOT necessary. Do not delay seeking immediate medical attention or risk further injury to the victim or others in an attempt to identify the snake.

DO NOT!

- Do not wait to seek medical attention until symptoms develop.
- Do not try to catch the snake! This will put yourself (and others) at risk.
- Do not apply a tourniquet to a bitten extremity. This can completely cut off blood flow and result in loss of the affected limb.
- Do not apply ice or attempt to cool the bite area.
- Do not make incisions at the bite marks and/or apply suction. This can cause further injury.
- Do not apply heat or electric shock.
- Do not give any stimulants or alcohol to the victim.

Additional Resources

This document is part of a four-document series produced by the UF/IFAS Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation:

- [Dealing with Venomous Snakes in Florida School Yards](#)
- [Preventing Encounters between Children and Snakes](#)
- [Emergency Snakebite Action Plan](#)
- [Recognizing Florida's Venomous Snakes](#)

A CD/DVD set that includes PowerPoint presentations (with speaking notes) and other information on venomous snake safety is available from the UF/IFAS Extension Bookstore (<http://www.ifasbooks.ufl.edu>).

Poison Control Hotline: 1-800-222-1222

Good Books on Florida Snakes

A Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America by Roger Conant and Joseph Collins, Houghton Mifflin Company, 3rd edition, 1998 (one of the Peterson Field Guide Series)

Florida's Fabulous Reptiles and Amphibians by Pete Carmichael and Winston Williams, World Publications, 2004

Snakes of the Southeast by Whit Gibbons and Mike Dorcas, University of Georgia Press, 2005

Snake Resources on the Internet

Dr. J's Wildlife Web Page—Online guide to Florida's Snakes: <http://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu/snakes/florida.shtml>

Florida Museum of Natural History—Online guide to Florida snakes: <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/herpetology/fl-guide/onlineguide.htm>

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission snake page: <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/> Choose the "reptile" category and "snake" subcategory.

Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) site: <http://www.parcplace.org/>

Snake Handling Equipment

<http://www.tongs.com> (we recommend their Gentle Giant tongs)

<http://www.tomahawklivetrap.com> (we recommend their 60" Standard Snake Tongs.)