

SNAKE BITES

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

1. Fang marks
2. Edema
3. Bruising
4. Exhaustion
5. Weakness
6. Loss of sensation
7. Faintness
8. Nausea/Vomiting
9. Seizure like tremors
10. Shock

PRECAUTIONS

1. If paged to a snakebite victim, consider notifying Medical Control.
2. Snakebites should be treated as rattlesnake bites unless proven otherwise.
3. Advise persons on scene not to move the victim unless absolutely necessary.

MEDICAL FIRST RESPONDER / BASIC LIFE SUPPORT:

1. Assess and assure ABC's.
2. Apply O₂ if patient is having shortness of breath or other signs of respiratory distress.
3. Have patient lay down with affected area lower than the heart, (recovery position if nauseated).
4. Apply triangle bandages above and below the bite (accept above and elbow/knee joints). The bandage should be no tighter than a tourniquet when used to draw blood (i.e. CMS should remain intact).
5. Check pulses and capillary refill below the bandages, (consider pulse oximeter on affected limb).
6. If able, gently wash bite.
7. Splint the limb to reduce movement.
8. Keep patient warm.
9. Have patient avoid exertion.

INTERMEDIATE TECH:

1. Consider 1:1000 Epinephrine 0.3-0.4 mg SQ if indicated for anaphylactic shock.
2. Initiate IV TKO in unaffected limb with 250cc fluid boluses only as indicated for shock.

INTERMEDIATE 99 & PARAMEDIC/RN:

1. Initiate ECG monitoring and frequently monitor patient for changes.
2. Monitor and treat for hypotension.

SPECIAL NOTES:

1. Significant symptoms occur in only about 20% of snakebite victims, and death is extremely unlikely, ground transport will be sufficient in most cases. (Only one recorded death from snakebite in Wisconsin since 1900).
2. NEVER cut the bite or try to suck out the venom.



Timothy Steinmetz, MD