

Don't panic. Determine if the snake is venomous; the only venomous snakes in the vicinity of the GMDRC are rattlesnakes.

If a rattlesnake has bitten you, immediately proceed to the hospital. Time is the most important factor in reducing the severity of the injury (or preventing death), the sooner you can get to the hospital the better. Call Poison Control Center (800) 222-1222, ask for advice on which hospital has the proper antivenin treatment available. The best hospital to be treated at for snakebites is Loma Linda Hospital. If you are going to be airlifted, ask if you can be taken to this hospital.

If you don't know what type of snake bit you, look for fang marks or swelling and color change in the area of the bite. If you have these symptoms, it was probably venomous.

Even if a non-venomous snake has bitten you, it is a good idea to have your injury assessed by a medical doctor.

Identifying the snake: If it has a rattle at the tip of the tail, it is a rattlesnake. But knowing which species has bitten you will be important for proper antivenin treatment. Take note of the color and type of snake that has bitten you. With a quick glance, you should be able to determine general body color, presence of eye "horns", presence of bands toward tail, or a whitish outline around the blotches. If the snake is dead, take it with you or take a photo for proper ID. Keep in mind a freshly killed rattlesnake can still inject venom. Do NOT attempt to kill the snake.

If bitten by a rattlesnake, DO:

- Keep the area of the snakebite lower than the heart. Keep calm, lower activity level.
- Wash bite area gently with soap and water, but do not flush it with water. Cover it with clean, dry dressing.
- Keep the bitten area still. You can immobilize the area with an improvised splint made from a board, magazines, or other stiff material tied to the limb. Don't tie it too tight, you don't want to reduce blood flow.
- Remove any jewelry or constricting items near the affected area in case of swelling.

If bitten by a rattlesnake, DO NOT:

- Over exert yourself, if possible carry the person to safety.
- Use ice to cool the bite.
- Cut open the wound and try to suck out the venom.
- Use a tourniquet. This will cut off blood flow and the limb may be lost.