



# SEASONAL HEALTH ALERT

## Snake Safety & Snake Bites

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Contact WAPC at [mryuk@wapc.org](mailto:mryuk@wapc.org) with questions

Image of Northern Pacific Rattlesnake  
Source: [Burke Museum](#)

Washington state summer hiking season is here, bringing unexpected opportunities to interact with native wildlife, including snakes. While the vast majority of snakes found in Washington state are harmless, the *Northern Pacific Rattlesnake is capable of delivering a venomous bite that can be life threatening*. Although typically limited to central and eastern Washington, rattlesnake species may cross into other regions.

### STAYING SAFE AROUND SNAKES

- Be proactive:
  - Know the name and location of your hiking trail
  - Hike with a buddy. If you hike alone, check cell phone service or carry a satellite emergency device
  - Store the Washington Poison Center phone number in your cell phone: 1 (800) 222-1222
  - Limit cell phone use to preserve battery life
- Wear over-the-ankle boots and long, loose hiking pants
- Use designated trails and carry a walking stick
- Never step or reach into densely vegetated areas or rocky piles
- If you encounter a rattlesnake or hear its distinctive rattle, move slowly away
- Never attempt to investigate or capture a snake

### IN CASE OF A SNAKE BITE

- Remain calm. Call 911 or the Washington Poison Center: 1 (800) 222-1222
- Restrict moving the affected limb
- Because swelling may occur, remove rings and other constricting items
- Never attempt to extract the snake venom from the bite site
- Never use commercially sold “Snake Bite Kits” or venom extractors. They are not effective and may worsen the tissue damage.
- Do not apply tourniquets or ice to the bite site, affected area, or limb
- Make a visual note of the snake’s description or safely photograph the snake - **but do not put yourself at risk**
- Do not attempt to capture the snake

**Call 911** if someone has been bitten by a snake & is experiencing difficulty breathing, swelling around the face, or loss of consciousness