



Seasonal Health Alert: Rattlesnake Bites

Warmer weather has finally arrived in Washington! We aren't the only ones soaking up the sun, though — some of us may be joined by slithery friends. Thankfully, only one of Washington's snake species can be concerning for humans: **the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake**. Its bite is rarely deadly, but it can still lead to serious health problems and high medical costs, making fast medical attention very important. Rattlesnakes are typically found in central and eastern Washington, but may cross into other regions.

Lower your chances of a dangerous encounter

- Be proactive:
 - Save our number: 1-800-222-1222
 - Hike with a buddy
 - If hiking alone, check your phone signal or bring a satellite emergency device
 - Know the name and location of your hiking trail, in case you need to call for help
 - Limit cell phone use to save battery
- Wear over-the-ankle boots and long, loose hiking pants
- Stick to marked trails and carry a walking stick or trekking poles
- Don't step or reach into thick brush, tall grass, or rock piles
- If you see a rattlesnake or hear its rattle, slowly move away
- Never try to catch, touch, or get close to a snake

If you are bitten, stay calm. Unlike what you see in movies, you do not only have minutes to live. Most people who are bitten and get medical help within a few hours recover well.

- Call 911 if the bitten person is having difficulty breathing, starts swelling around the face, or loses consciousness, or was bitten on the face
- Call us at 1-800-222-1222 for help locating the nearest emergency room. We will call ahead to let them know you are on your way, and will also help them with your treatment.
- Keep the bitten area still and lower than the heart, if possible, until reaching the hospital
- Remove rings, watches, or tight clothing near the bite site in case of swelling
- Do **NOT** try the following methods, as **they do not work and may cause more harm**:
 - Sucking out the venom or cutting the wound
 - Using snakebite kits
 - Applying ice
 - Applying a tourniquet
- Try to note what the snake looks like or safely take a photo of it for identification. But, don't risk another bite by capturing or killing the snake, and do not bring the snake to the hospital.

The bottom line: if you are bitten, the best tools you can use are your car keys and phone. Go safely to a hospital and call the Poison Center.