

DOs and DON'Ts in case of a snake bite in Zambia

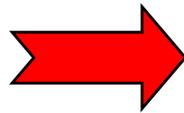
Zambia is home to 99 species of snakes, of which 25 species, whose bite requires medical attention. 13 species can inject a venom that usually requires giving anti-venom. Of these 13, only 8 are common.

There is much misinformation on the internet about snakebite treatment in Africa. This poster provide information on first aid in snakebites in Zambia.



For more information:
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**In case of a
snakebite,
time is of the essence**



**The shorter the time between the bite and
proper treatment at a health facility, the higher
the chance of survival!**

Follow this protocol in any snakebite case:

KEEP VICTIM CALM - CONTACT AN EXPERT - TRANSPORT TO HOSPITAL - IMMOBILISE AND ELEVATE LIMB

RULE 1:

NEVER DO THIS:

1. Don't waste time!

Do not try to catch or kill the snake. You are wasting precious time because the doctor is unlikely to know the snake species.

If the snake is already dead or if it is safe to do so: make a photo of the snake so that snake experts can identify it. But again: **don't waste time!** The experts can advise on treatment **based on the symptoms**.

2. Don't apply any of the methods below:

Don't cut or suck the bite site

Don't apply electricity

Don't apply or give alcohol

Don't treat the bite site with heat or cold treatment

Don't apply any traditional medication

Don't apply anti-venom as a first aid measure

Don't apply tourniquet unless advised by a snakebite expert

All these measures do nothing to neutralise the venom but they waste time!

RULE 2:

ALWAYS DO THIS:

1. Calm the bite victim down.

The calmer the victim is, the slower the venom spreads. A bite usually occurs in limbs, where it can't kill the victim. We want it to stay there. Reassure the victim, explain that most snakebites aren't deadly and that there is enough time to reach a health facility.

2. If possible, call a snakebite expert (see box below)

3. Immediately bring the victim to a health facility.

From the moment of the bite until the arrival at the health facility, the limb where the bite is, must be kept higher than the heart. This reduces the blood pressure and slows the venom down

3. Make sure the victim doesn't use or even move the limb.

Unless an expert has instructed otherwise, keep the limb still, because movement helps in spreading the venom.

4. Observe the victim and note symptom.

Symptoms may help the doctors give the right treatment. (time of the bite, dizziness, slurred speaking, swelling, pain at the bite site, etc.)

Where does the venom go?

Popular belief: most people believe venom goes into the **blood stream**. This is **wrong**.

In reality: usually venom is injected in **muscles** and transmitted through the **lymphatic system**. The more you move, the quicker you pump the venom from this system to the blood stream and the vital organs, where it can become life-threatening. (An exception is the venom of the Black mamba, which is capable of entering the blood vessels as well as the lymphatic system). After injection, venom spreads through your tissue. It is **impossible** to suck it out! Injecting **anti-venom** is the **only** remedy when a deadly amount of a venom is injected.

Traditional medication

Many believe in the effectiveness of traditional medication in snakebite treatment.

Unfortunately, **THEY CAN NOT WORK!**

Bringing a victim to a traditional healer **wastes valuable time**.

In addition:

Traditional healers work in a non-sterile environment with non-sterile instruments and materials. Treating a snakebite victim in such an environment can lead to additional problems, such as infections.

Venom in the eye

Venom in the eye **without a bite on the body** is

NOT life-threatening!

And:

It does **not** require anti-venom.

Do the following:

- 1) **Immediately** rinse eye with running water for 15-20 minutes
- 2) Have the eye checked by a doctor

CONTACT THESE SNAKEBITE EXPERTS FOR ADVISE

(AND TO ADVISE THE DOCTOR):

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