



## SAFETY MATTERS

RISK MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

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## SNAKE SAFETY

**OBJECTIVE** Snakes are found in many parts of California and may pose a hazard for those working or playing outdoors. Although snakes generally avoid humans or animals, they can attack if they're surprised or provoked.

Southern California has several native venomous species of rattlesnakes: the Western Diamondback, Sidewinder, Speckled rattlesnake, Red Diamond rattlesnake, Southern Pacific, Great Basin rattlesnake and the Mojave rattlesnake.

As warm weather continues across California outdoor creatures are looking for cooler places to rest from the heat, just like many of us! As school is back in session and for many of the areas that are closer to wildlife, keeping a look out for these creatures is a must, especially our slithery friends. Generally, not aggressive, rattlesnakes strike when threatened or deliberately provoked, but given room they will retreat. Most snake bites occur when a rattlesnake is handled or accidentally touched by someone walking or climbing. Most snakebites occur on the hands, feet, and ankles.

Rattlesnakes usually avoid humans, but about 8,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes in the United States each year, with 10 to 15 deaths, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.





The following information provides precautions to prevent snake bites and first aid recommendations if bitten by a rattlesnake.

## PRECAUTIONS

Most bites occur between the months of April and October when snakes and humans are most active outdoors. About 25 percent of the bites are “dry,” meaning no venom was injected, but the bites still require medical treatment. Depending on weather and threatening conditions such as wildfires; rattlesnakes may roam at any time of the day or night. To avoid rattlesnake bites some safety precautions will help:

- Avoid approaching any snake
- If snakes are common in the area, posting warning signs will help notify individuals of the potential presence of snakes
- Wear appropriate over-the-ankle shoes/boots, never go barefoot or wear sandals when walking through wild areas
- Stick to well-used pathways if possible
- Avoid tall grass, weeds, and heavy underbrush where snakes may hide during the day.
- Look at your feet to watch where you step
- Do not step or put your hands where you cannot see
- If a fallen tree or large rock is in your path, step up on to it instead of over it, as there might be a snake on the other side.
- Check out stumps, logs or outdoor seating before sitting down
- Do not turn over rocks or logs. If you must move a rock or log, use gloves, and roll it toward you, giving anything beneath it the opportunity to escape in the opposite direction.
- If you hear the warning rattle, move away from the area and do not make sudden or threatening movements in the direction of the snake.
- Remember rattlesnakes do not always rattle before they strike!
- Do not handle a freshly killed snake - it can still inject venom.



## SNAKE SAFETY FOR KIDS

### Be Aware

Be on the lookout for snakes when children are playing outdoors. Remind them to watch where they step and reach, in case snakes live in the area.

### Be a Teacher

Teach kids not to approach any snakes in the wild, and how to identify snakes that may be more common in your city/area.

### Protective Clothing and Shoes

Long pants and boots offer better protection especially in wooded areas, tall grassy areas, and other places where snakes may live

### Practice Snake Safety

A helpful way to help younger children learn how to react when confronted by a real snake is to set up a game with a fake “snake”, and have the kids practice backing away from it, and telling an adult. This will teach them how they should react around a real snake.







### **SYMPTOMS OF A RATTLESNAKE BITE**

- Rattlesnakes may bite without injecting venom, called a "dry bite," but the painful bite can still get infected.
- If a rattlesnake injects venom into the wound, a variety of symptoms develop swelling, pain, bleeding at the site, nausea, vomiting, sweating, chills, dizziness, weakness, numbness or tingling of the mouth or tongue, changes in the heart rate and blood pressure, excessive salivation, thirst, swollen eyelids, blurred vision, muscle spasms, and unconsciousness.
- Some bites may prevent the ability of the blood to clot properly, and others (from the Mojave rattlesnake) can affect the nervous system and can lead to paralysis.

	<b>DO</b>	<b>DON'T</b>
<p><b>FIRST AID</b></p> <p>(If bitten by a rattlesnake)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stay Calm</li><li>• Call dispatch via radio or 911</li><li>• Wash the bite area gently with soap and water if available</li><li>• Remove watches, rings, etc., which may constrict swelling</li><li>• Immobilize the affected area</li><li>• Keep the bite below the heart if possible</li><li>• Transport safely to the nearest medical facility immediately</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not make incisions over the bite wound</li><li>• Do not restrict blood flow by applying a tourniquet</li><li>• Do not ice the wound</li><li>• Do not suck the poison out with your mouth</li></ul> <p>These methods can very well cause additional harm.</p>

**Resources**

[San Bernardino National Forest: Rattlesnakes Live Here](#)

*This California Schools JPA fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.*

