

How to Care for Your Child After a Snake Bite

This leaflet will provide you with information about snake bite symptoms and important treatment tips.



What is a snake bite?

- A snake bite is when a snake uses its fangs to bite as a form of self-defense when it feels threatened, for example; if someone accidentally steps on the snake, or tries to harm it or capture it.
- Some snakes may inject their venom (poison). However, not all snakes have venom and even venomous snakes may not always inject their venom.
- In Qatar, snake bites can happen at any time of the year, but are more common during the desert camping season in the winter. However, most poisonous snake bite cases in Qatar are not severe and rarely cause life-threatening symptoms.
- It is usually difficult to identify the type of the snake that caused the bite.

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Local (bite area) symptoms – low-to-moderate:

- Local pain at the bite area
- Swelling
- Blistering
- Possible tissue damage

Generalized (whole-body) symptoms – severe:

- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Blurred vision
- Headache
- Muscle weakness or paralysis
- Slurred speech
- Dizziness
- Difficulty breathing and/or swallowing
- Fainting
- Fast or pounding heartbeat
- High or low blood pressure
- Bleeding, either from the bite area or elsewhere
- Dark or red urine

What should I do if my child got a snake bite?

DO

- Take your child to the emergency department immediately, or call 999 for ambulance transfer.
- Stay calm and call the Qatar Poison Center at 4003-1111 immediately. They can advise on how you can further help your child depending on the situation.
- Remove tight clothing, jewelry, or shoes from the affected limb or bite area.

- Note the time when the bite happened.
- Take a picture of the snake from a safe distance; this may help doctors in choosing the right treatment, if needed.
- Keep the bitten limb or body part still and at or slightly below the heart level.
- Wash the bite area with soap and water.
- You can give your child pain medicines (such as paracetamol or ibuprofen).

DO NOT:

- Do not place a tourniquet (a tight band) or wrap a cloth tightly around the bite area.
- Do not try to capture or kill the snake. Even dead snakes can bite reflexively.
- Do not try to suck the venom out or cut around the bite area.
- Do not apply heat, electricity, ice, or any other substances to the bite area.
- Do not give any medicines other than pain killers before confirming the correct dose for your child with Qatar Poison Center.

How is a snake bite treated?

- The doctor at the emergency department will assess the severity of the bite by evaluating your child's symptoms and performing vitals signs and blood tests if needed.
- Treatment will depend on the severity of the symptoms:

For mild symptoms:

- Pain medicines to relieve pain (such as paracetamol or ibuprofen)
- Anti-histamines to reduce skin reactions
- Anti-nausea medicines to stop nausea and vomiting

For severe symptoms:

- Anti-venom and hospital admission might be needed in some severe cases. However, anti-venom can cause severe allergic reactions, and should only be given at the hospital. Such severe cases are rare in Qatar.

When should I seek urgent medical care?

Go to the nearest emergency department, or call 999 for immediate ambulance transfer if your child:

- Got bitten by a snake.
- Develops any of the following symptoms after already being discharged from the hospital:
 - Worsening of the bite area
 - Severe pain
 - Fever above 38.0°C

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