

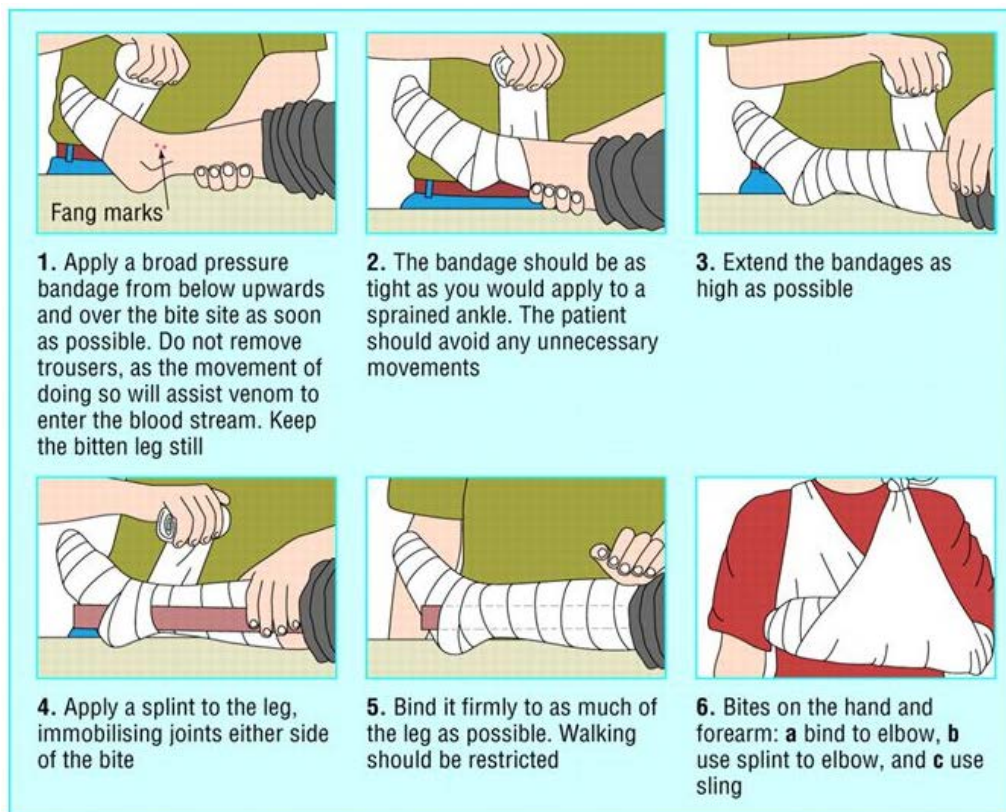
Snake Bite!

It is extremely rare for a snake to bite unprovoked. Want to know how to avoid being bitten by a snake?

- Leave snakes alone!
- When outdoors, watch where you put your hands and feet.
- Always wear boots and long, loose-fitting pants. They won't stop a bite but reduce the risk of a fang penetrating in the unlikely event of a snake trying to bite you.

Remember: You have more chance of dying from lightning than from a snake bite. Seriously. If you are bitten though, here is what you should do:

1. Getting to a hospital quickly is first prize!
2. If there is **NO SWELLING**, use the pressure-immobilization technique



- **DO NOT:** Bite, cut or suck the wound.
- Do not apply a tourniquet (can cause serious damage and lead to amputations!)
- Do not consume alcohol
- Never try to administer antivenin yourself – it is **often not needed**.
- **Don't fiddle. Get to a hospital as quickly as possible.**
- Don't Panic! Very few people die from snake bite if treated quickly and properly. Venom may be spread faster if there is excessive movement. **Don't run.**

Remaining calm could save your life. Remember this.

Emergency Numbers

Tygerberg Poison Centre:	021 931 6329
Red Cross Hospital:	021 689 5227
Emergency Services:	021 480 7700

If you are bitten by a Cape cobra, assisted respiration (mouth-to-mouth) may be needed.

Venom

Snake venom is a complex concoction of various bioactive proteins and polypeptides fine-tuned by evolution to create amazingly efficient substances used to subdue and digest prey. This modified saliva is often a cocktail of various complexes; for example neurotoxic venom may have Cytotoxic properties and vice versa. Here is how it works:

- **Neurotoxic Venom** affects the central nervous system. Respiratory muscles are paralysed over time that may result in respiratory failure.
Symptoms: Pain at the bite site; progressive weakness; pins and needles; drowsiness; drooping eyelids; nausea and vomiting; difficulty swallowing and breathing.
- **Cytotoxic Venom** affects tissues and blood cells. In severe cases there may be excessive swelling, necrosis and may result in the loss of a limb.
Symptoms: Intense local pain and swelling. Shock may lead to symptoms of panic.
- **Haemotoxin Venom** affects the blood and its coagulant properties and may cause severe internal bleeding as well as bleeding from membranes and small cuts.
Symptoms: No immediate pain; headaches, nausea and vomiting, sweating, mental confusion; very few noticeable physical symptoms.