

# Snake Safety

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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. The majority of snakebites occur on the hands, feet and ankles.

**Precautions-** To avoid rattlesnake bites some safety precautions will help:

- Wear appropriate over-the-ankle hiking boots, thick socks, and loose-fitting long pants. Never go barefoot or wear sandals when walking through wild areas.
- When hiking, stick to well-used trails if all possible.
- Avoid tall grass, weeds and heavy underbrush where snakes may hide during the day.
- Look at your feet to watch where you step and do not put your foot in or near a crevice where you cannot see.
- Do not step or put your hands where you cannot see, and avoid wandering around in the dark.
- 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.
- Be especially careful when climbing rocks or gathering firewood.
- Check out stumps or logs before sitting down
- Do not turn over rocks or logs.
- Avoid approaching any snake you cannot positively identify as a safe species.
- 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.

## First Aid

If bitten by a rattlesnake **DO:**

- Stay calm and call 911
- Remove watches, rings, etc., which may constrict swelling
- Immobilize the affected area
- Keep the bite below the heart if possible

## **DO NOT:**

- Do not make incisions over the bite wound.
- Do not restrict blood flow by applying a tourniquet.
- Do not ice the wound.
- Do not suck the poison out with your mouth.