



SNAKES

Many people fear snakes because they do not understand them or their importance in the natural world. While several species are potentially dangerous to humans, most are harmless creatures that form vital links in their ecosystems as highly efficient predators of rodents.

Most of the time, people and snakes do not meet. However, snakes occasionally frequent buildings in search of food and shelter. Although there is usually a degree of fear associated with these encounters, there shouldn't be. This is mainly because most snakes we encounter are non-venomous, harmless and beneficial.

VENOMOUS SNAKES IN PENNSYLVANIA

Twenty one species of snakes are considered to be native to Pennsylvania. Of these snakes, only three are considered venomous: the **Northern Copperhead**, **Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake**, and **Timber rattlesnake**.

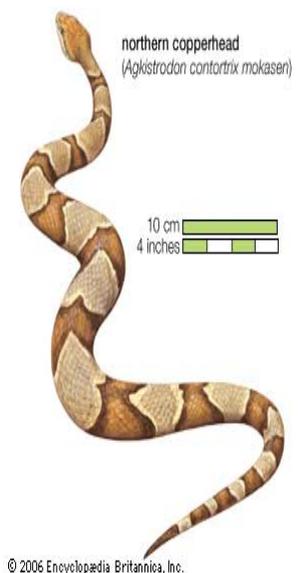
Reports of venomous snakebites are rare. Bites usually occur while a person is trying to catch or handle one of these snakes. All of these species are generally non-aggressive and prefer to avoid confrontation.

All Pennsylvania native venomous snakes possess:

- an indentation or pit on each side of the head between the eye and nostril
- a vertically elliptical eye pupil resembling that of a cat
- a single row of scales on the underside of the tail

Of course, rattlesnakes can be distinguished by one or more rattles located on their tail. However, these may be missing because of natural causes.

Non-venomous Pennsylvania native snakes do not have facial pits, their eye pupils are round like a human's, and there is a double row of scales on the underside of the tail.



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Timber Rattlesnake

PREVENTING SNAKES INSIDE THE HOME

- Most snakes are poor climbers, so seal openings and cracks, especially at ground level.
- There is no known effective snake repellent that can be used safely without danger to pets or people.
- Remove dense groundcover plantings from the foundation area. Eliminate potential food sources such as rats, mice, etc.

SNAKE BITES

There are several signs and symptoms of snake bites (envenomation). These include fang marks, pain and possibly a metallic or rubbery taste in the mouth several minutes after a bite, with a tingling or numbness of the tongue. Other signs include major swelling within 10 minutes of a bite. Nausea, weakness and temperature change may occur. Black and blue discoloration may appear within three to six hours.

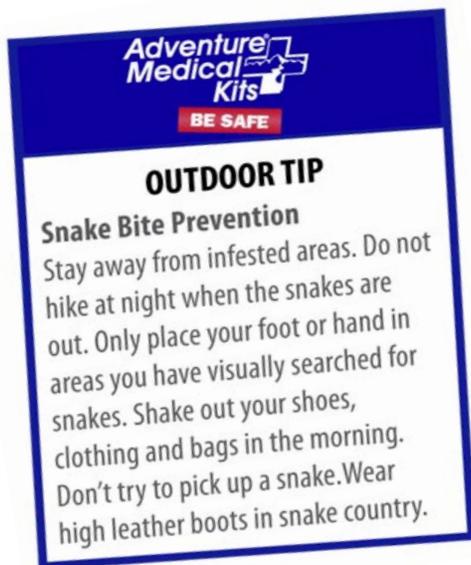
If a person is bitten by a venomous snake, there are several steps that should be taken. The staff at the Penn State Poison Center of the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center in Hershey, Pennsylvania recommends the following do's and don'ts in the event of a snake bite.

DO'S

- ☑ Calm and reassure the victim, keep them immobile
- ☑ Call the Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222)
- ☑ You may apply a "light" constricting band (be able to insert a finger under the band)
- ☑ Move the victim to a medical facility without delay
- ☑ A tetanus shot may also be required

DON'TS

- ☒ Don't use ice, cold packs or sprays
- ☒ Don't incise and suction the bite wound unless directed by a physician
- ☒ Don't give alcohol or drugs
- ☒ Don't wait to see if symptoms develop.



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