

# Snake bite

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## FIRST AID FACT SHEET

# How to treat a snake bite

Snake bites are not common in Australia, but all should be treated as life threatening. Snakes force venom out under pressure through fangs in the upper jaw. The spread of snake venom depends on its absorption through the lymphatic system.

## What to do

1. Follow DRSABCD St John Action Plan (<https://stjohnwa.com.au/online-resources/first-aid-information-and-resources/drsabcd-action-plan>).
2. Urgent medical aid. Call **Triple Zero (000)** for an ambulance.
3. Ensure the casualty does not move.
4. Lay the casualty down, rest and reassure.
5. If the bite is on a limb, apply a broad pressure bandage over the bite site as soon as possible.
6. Then apply a further elasticised or firm bandage - start at fingers or toes and move up the limb as far as can be reached. Apply tightly but without stopping blood flow.
7. Splint the limb including the joints on either side of the bite.
8. Write down the time that the casualty was bitten and when the bandage was applied.
9. If the casualty becomes unconscious and not breathing normally, Commence CPR and Defibrillation.

## Do not

Do not wash the venom off the skin (it may aid in identification).  
Do not cut the bitten area and try to suck the venom out of the wound.  
Do not use a tourniquet.  
Do not try and catch the snake.

## Signs and symptoms

Visible in an hour or more after the person has been bitten.  
In children, signs and symptoms may appear within minutes.  
Paired fang marks, but often only a single mark or a scratch mark may be present. Marks or scratches may bleed.  
Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.  
Headache, drowsiness, giddiness or faintness.  
Double or blurred vision, drooping eyelids.

Voice changes, trouble speaking or swallowing. Pain or tightness in the throat, chest or abdomen.  
Breathing difficulties, respiratory weakness or arrest.

## **Caused by**

Fangs puncturing the skin.