



# VCU Health™

## VCU Medical Center

**Our records show that you were recently treated for a snake bite.  
We are sending this helpful information to you as you recover at home.**

### **SNAKEBITES**

#### **Frequently Asked Questions**

##### **WHAT is the Virginia Poison Center?**

The Virginia Poison Center (VPC) is a free service of the VCU Health System, located in Richmond. Anyone can call the Virginia Poison Center's 24/7 hotline at **(800) 222-1222** and talk with a registered nurse who is an expert in the care of a person who is poisoned. Our callers include doctors and other health care providers who want information to help choose the best care for a poisoned patient. Our nurses often follow-up with callers to check on the patient's condition.

##### **WHAT is the best treatment for a poisonous snake bite?**

The VPC offers information to any caller, but it is your medical provider who decides how to treat you for a poisonous snake bite.

Many people do very well with only rest, pain medicine and elevating the bitten extremity on a pillow. Antivenin **may** be given at the hospital to someone whose symptoms are very serious. In these cases, it should be given as early as possible after the bite.

##### **HOW long will my symptoms last?**

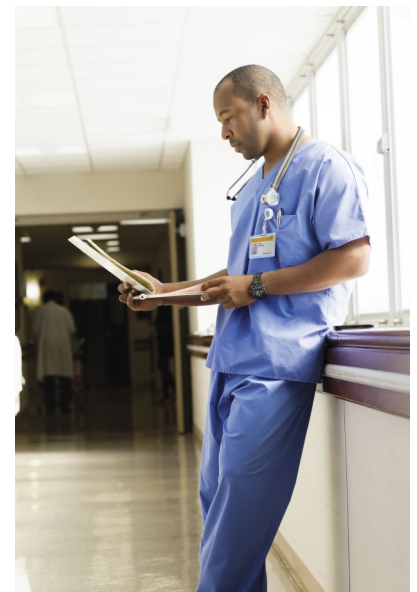
Your body will heal from a poisonous snakebite **slowly**.  
Many people have some problems for several weeks.

##### **WHAT should I expect at home?**

**Swelling** of the body part that was bitten. The swelling can make it hard to use your hand or foot, or fit into shoes or clothes.

**Bruises** may appear near the bite.

**Pain** should get less each day.



## **WHAT can I do to get well?**

Keep the bitten extremity elevated on a pillow for most of the day when sitting. Don't let your bitten hand or foot hang down – unless you need to move with crutches. Swelling and pain will likely get worse if you let the bitten extremity hang down or you overuse it too soon.

If the bite is on the foot or leg, avoid standing for long periods of time.

Gently move and use the bitten extremity as soon as possible, expect some pain. Avoid prolonged periods of non-use. The sooner activity resumes, the sooner you will get back to normal.

Take pain medicines carefully if you need them. Follow your doctor's orders .

Do NOT apply ice to the bite.

NO wrapping or bandages.

Keeping the bite site clean with soap and water will help prevent infections – but infections do not usually happen after a snakebite.

## **WHEN should I call my doctor?**

You should call your doctor if the bitten area looks very red, feels very hot if you touch it, if you have a fever, if the pain becomes more severe, or if the bitten area or extremity becomes more swollen.

If you have signs of bleeding: like bruises, or bleeding from your nose or gums, or if you see blood in your stool or urine.

If you were treated with antivenom and later have a rash on your skin, have muscle or joint pain, a fever, swollen lymph nodes, or excessive tiredness or weakness.

## **WHERE can I get more help?**

You can call the Virginia Poison Center at **(800) 222-1222** anytime for questions.

You can ask for an appointment at the VCU Medical Center Toxicology clinic by calling (804) 628-4242.

These websites have information that may be helpful:

<https://www.dgif.virginia.gov>

<https://aapcc.org/prevention/bites-stings>

<https://poison.vcu.edu/>

**Virginia Poison Center**  
VCU Health System  
Richmond, Virginia  
Emergencias (800) 222-1222  
Oficina (804) 828-4780  
[www.poison.vcu.edu](http://www.poison.vcu.edu)

