

# Your Weekly Dose

From Lincoln Community Hospital

Happy summer everyone! Most of you are probably aware by now, but the rattlesnakes are bad this summer! As with many medical emergencies, prevention is the key. Here are some tips and reminders to avoid a bite in the first place. Protect your loved ones, pets and YOU by:

## SNAKE SAFETY

- Avoid tall grass, weeds, heavy underbrush or anywhere a snake might be hiding.
- Mow and pull to clear areas near your home or anywhere you have to walk regularly. (This won't necessarily keep them away, but it helps and you will be able to see them sooner!)
- Wear boots when you are out walking in tall grass, weeds, and fields. The snake will strike your boot instead of your leg. Have your kids wear boots as well or carry them if they're small enough.
- Wear gloves/long sleeves when clearing out areas or pulling weeds.
- Keep a sharp eye out! Snakes don't WANT to run into you, any more than you do with them. Better to avoid a confrontation in the first place.
- Keep a sharp ear out! Hopefully, the snake will rattle to warn you, so you can avoid each other.
- Rattlesnakes don't ALWAYS rattle before they strike! If they are startled, they will bite without warning.
- Use a flashlight when walking at night.
- Teach your kids about snake safety.
- Don't kill a rattlesnake unless you have to. Ones found up by your place, yes, but if they aren't a threat, leave them alone. They eat vermin in the fields, which helps us all.

**Even with the best efforts, sometimes rattlesnake bites happen. So what do you do?**

### DON'T!

- DO NOT cut an X over the bite and try to suck out the poison. Remember, you are not John Wayne in "True Grit," this is dangerous and never effective.
- DO NOT apply a tourniquet. This just causes more problems by restricting blood flow to surrounding, healthy tissues.
- DO NOT apply ice. This seems counter-intuitive, but if you slow the blood flow down and it stays in the bite area, it will remain concentrated and poison/kill healthy cells.

### DO

- Stay calm/help the victim stay calm. Slow heart-rate = Slow blood flow.  
**Call 911/get them to an ER as fast as possible....SAFELY.**
- Immobilize the body part that got the bite with a soft splint of rolled towels/blankets.
- Keep that body part "dependent" so the blood with venom in it cannot flow quickly. (Keep it below the heart) It will dissipate the poison and minimize the damage to tissues.
- Remove Watches, rings, etc. that will constrict the limb if it swells.
- Wash the bite area gently with soap and water, if possible.

**FUN FACT:** Rattlesnake anti-venom is made from antibodies extracted from horse blood because horses aren't affected by rattlesnake venom as we humans are. Interesting huh? However, it is EXPENSIVE to buy and store at medical facilities and does not always reverse the venom's effects.

**Remember: PREVENTION IS KEY and GET TO THE ER ASAP**

Have a safe and happy summer everyone!

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Your Medical Staff at Lincoln Community Hospital

For further information go to: [http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5393596.pdf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5393596.pdf) on your web browser.

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