

FIRST AID WORKSHOP

SNAKE AND SPIDER BITES

The NNRC recently held a First Aid Workshop presented by David Hamilton from St. Johns, the topic was snake and spider bites and what to do if you get bitten. In both cases if the casualty is young or old get medical attention asap.

Snake Bites

Death from venomous snake bites in Australia are relatively uncommon but it is extremely important to recognise the symptoms and manage the situation.

Symptoms of a snake bite:

- Puncture marks
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea
- Headache
- Double or blurred vision
- Breathing difficulties
- Drowsiness, giddiness
- Pain or tightness in the throat, chest or abdomen
- Respiratory weakness or arrest

How to manage a snake bite:-

- Check that the snake is no longer around causing a threat.
- Check that the casualty is breathing and responsive
- Calm casualty, get them to lay down
- Apply bandage to bite site—if on a limb tightly apply a pressure immobilisation bandage starting just above fingers and/or toes as far up the limb as possible.
- Immobilise casualty—apply a splint to immobilise the bitten limb, check circulation in fingers or toes and ensure casualty does not move.
- Call 000 for an ambulance

DO NOT WASH THE VENOM OFF THE SKIN, CUT THE BITTEN AREA OR SUCK THE VENOM OUT OF THE WOUND

Spider Bites

Australia has about 2,000 species of spiders and most of these are relatively harmless to humans. First aid for a venomous spider bite depends on the species of spider. In South Australia the most common bites are from the red-back and the white tailed spider.

Symptoms of a Red-back bite and a funnel-web spider bite:

- Copious secretion of saliva
- Intense local pain which increase and spreads
- Confusion leading to unconsciousness
- Small hairs stand on end
- Muscular twitching
- Patchy Sweating
- Breathing difficulty
- Headache
- Muscle weakness or spasms
- Numbness around mouth
- Copious tears

Other spider bites

- Disorientation
- Sharp pain at bite site
- Fast Pulse
- Profuse sweating
- Increased blood pressure
- Nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain

How to management spider bite:

- Check that casualty is breathing and responsive
- Lie casualty down
- Calm and reassure casualty
- For Red-back spider apply cold pack/compress to area to lessen pain and seek medical aid promptly
- Other spider bites wash with soap and water, apply icepack and seek medical aid if casualty develops severe symptoms