

RATTLESNAKES IN ARIZONA

Arizona has the most diverse population of rattlesnakes with about 15 different species of rattlesnakes in the state. The Western Diamondback rattlesnake is the most common. Other common species include the Mohave rattlesnake and Sidewinder.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Rattlesnakes can be distinguished from other snakes by features including:

- A triangular head
- Cat-like, elliptical pupils
- Loreal or heat-sensing pits between the nostrils and eyes
- A rattle at the the end of the tail

RATTLESNAKE BEHAVIOR

- Most active during the warmest months of the year in the early mornings and late afternoons/evenings
- Camouflage well into their environment
- Do not always rattle before striking
- Can strike up to half of their body length
- Will not chase people. Instead, they will attempt to move away.

In general, rattlesnakes are not aggressive. They want to avoid interactions with humans and do not set out with the intention of biting humans but will do so if provoked or if they sense they are in danger.

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RATTLESNAKE SAFETY

ARIZONA
Poison and Drug
Information Center



1-800-222-1222

RATTLESNAKE BITE STATISTICS

The Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center specializes in treating rattlesnake bites. Arizona has the highest number of rattlesnakes bites per capita, per year compared to other states. Annually, our center manages nearly 200 rattlesnake bites.

In Arizona, rattlesnake season occurs from April through October.

- Most bites occur between 4pm and 10pm; coinciding with the coolest part of the day during the warmest months
- Most bites occur at a place of residence
- Common circumstances during which people are bitten include
 - While gardening or doing yard work
 - Reaching into something (bush, shed, etc.)
 - Taking out the trash
 - Stepping out of a vehicle or home



PREVENTING A SNAKE BITE

- Keep hands and feet out of tight spaces
- Install lights around your home and along pathways
- Use flashlights while walking outdoors while it is dark outside
- Avoid handling snakes
- Take action to keep rattlesnakes away from your home
 - Keep lawn well-maintained
 - Remove rock, log, debris piles
 - Remove sources of water
 - Control rodent populations



For more information on rattlesnakes read our newsletter, *News From The Pit*.

WHAT TO DO IF BITTEN

- Immediately go to the hospital. Antivenom, required to treat rattlesnake bites, is only available at hospitals.
- Even if bite site looks normal, venom can still be causing an increased risk of bleeding. Assessing this requires labs to be completed at a hospital immediately.
- Remove jewelry/tight clothing/shoes near the bite.
- Do NOT cut or try to suck out venom
- Do NOT use tourniquets or tight bandages
- It not necessary to identify the type of rattlesnake in order to receive treatment

PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF A RATTLESNAKE BITE

- Local injury includes: pain, bruising, blistering, swelling, and tissue damage.
- Venom can affect the blood's ability to form clots leading to an increased risk of bleeding.

COSTS OF BEING BITTEN

Being bitten by a rattlesnake can be costly, not just financially, but in other ways as the effects of a rattlesnake bite can be long-lasting and affect several aspects of daily life.

FINANCIAL COSTS

Total cost of treating a rattlesnake bite can be over \$100,000. This includes the cost of antivenom, labs, medications, and other fees associated with a stay in the hospital.

PHYSICAL COSTS

Patients can experience pain, muscle weakness, loss or limited function, swelling and numbness that can last 3 to 6 months after a bite at the least.

OPPORTUNITY COSTS

Patients may have to take extended time off work or may have to return to work and work through symptoms such as pain. Depending on the severity of the bite, some patients may not be able to return to work at all or may have to change jobs.