

APRIL 2025

THE POISON PREVENTION SCRIPT

Things are heating up in AZ!

Warmer temperatures are moving in, snakes are coming out

In this edition, we feature current snake trends and safety information. Although our peak bite months are in August and September, rattlesnake bites have been regular since mid-March. Read through the second page to learn more about keeping yourself and your family safe from a snake bite!

Coming up: National Drug Take Back Day

On April 26th, we recognize National Prescription Drug Take Back Day. This is country-wide day to safely dispose of medications that are expired or no longer needed. It is important to safely dispose of medications instead of tossing them directly in a trash, flushing them down a toilet, or rinsing them down the sink drain.

Participating entities include various pharmacies and police departments. To find a participating disposal site nearest to you and for more information, [click this link](https://www.dea.gov/takebackday) to visit the DEA website or go to www.dea.gov/takebackday.

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ARIZONA
Poison and Drug
Information Center





Staying Safe During Rattlesnake Season

With warmer temperatures comes the visibility of our desert-sharing neighbors, rattlesnakes! Right now, our poison center is averaging one snake bite reported PER DAY! Male snakes are out and about searching for females due to mating season, so you may see snakes in places you usually wouldn't. Here are some tips on keeping yourself safe from a rattlesnake run-in!

Check for Rattlesnakes BEFORE Allowing Backyard Playtime

As mentioned above, male rattlesnakes may turn up in unexpected spots during April, such as out in the open in backyards. People that are bitten this time of year are typically children playing in their backyard at home in the afternoon. It is best to check for rattlesnakes before allowing children to spend time outside, or before letting your dog outside.

ALWAYS Watch Where You Put Your Hands and Feet!

Another common demographic for rattlesnake bites is those that work outdoors, such as landscapers and construction workers. Always have full visibility of where you are putting both your hands and your feet to prevent a bite from an unseen snake.

Be Aware of the Peak Bite Times

Many people think that rattlesnakes prefer hot, middle-of-the-day temperatures, but they actually prefer to be out and about when we do: during those warm, not-too-hot hours, earlier in the morning or later in the evening. We typically see bites most during these times of day. It is never a bad idea to be extra aware during these peak hours!

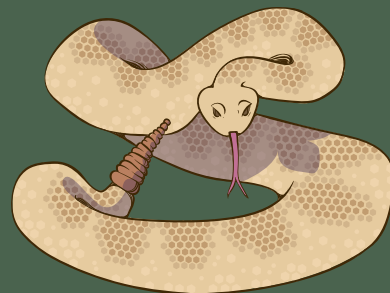
Remember that Snakes Will NOT Bother You if Left Alone

It is unheard of for a rattlesnake to chase or "attack" humans. They know they are much smaller than us and just want to be left alone! If you do come face to face with a snake, take three big steps back and leave it be. Running into a rattlesnake should be an exciting experience but always keep safety in mind!

Bite First Aid

The only treatment for a rattlesnake bite is antivenom, which can only be given in a **hospital**. No matter where you are, walk to safety as needed and seek medical attention as soon as possible. Do not tourniquet the bitten area, and remove all restrictive clothing, shoes, and jewelry. Most importantly, remain calm! Deaths are extremely rare, and the sooner you seek treatment, the less tissue damage.

Are you a lover of all things rattlesnakes?



<https://azpoison.com/content/news-pit>

Click the link to view and subscribe to News from the Pit, our rattlesnake newsletter!





National Public Health Week

For 30 years now, we have been celebrating National Public Health Week in April. It is a week to remind us of the exceedingly important work happening in the public health field: advancing health equity, improving community health and well-being, and championing policies that protect and promote public health.

National Public Health Week was created by the American Public Health Association (APHA). APHA “advocates for the health of all communities, strengthens the public health profession, and drives science-based public health policies” (via www.nphw.org).

Poison Centers represent public health in action! Our educators work hard to reach all communities and spread the word on poisoning and envenomation prevention.



In the Community: Meet the Monument at Ironwood Forest

On March 22nd, educators Cori Cantin and Heather Doss joined wildlife biologist Michael Cardwell at the Meet the Monument event with the Friends of Ironwood Forest. Here, they showcased three venomous reptiles for the public to see up close: a Mohave rattlesnake, a Western Diamondback rattlesnake, and a Gila Monster.

During the event, lots of excellent safety questions regarding bites and stings were answered, and various educational materials were handed out for free, including magnets, reptile coloring sheets, poison center wallet cards, and drawstring bags!

Bites and stings safety is important to share throughout the year, but March kicks off rattlesnake season, so this event came at just the right time.



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Staff Spotlight: Dr. Geoffrey Smelski, Clinical Education Director

Geoff Smelski, PharmD, DABAT



Dr. Smelski is a licensed pharmacist and board-certified toxicologist, currently serving as the Clinical Education Director for the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center. In his current role he serves as the fellowship director for both the clinical toxicology and a new public health and envenomation research fellowship. Most of his time is spent coordinating the many research efforts of the center, which typically requires mentoring multiple fellows, residents, and interns. Additionally, he personally functions as primary investigator on select research projects. Most of the poison center's current research is focused on the management of rattlesnake envenomation. When not working on research, the remainder of his time is spent between providing direct patient care and teaching.

To date, every fellow who has graduated from our program since Dr. Smelski became the director has passed their board exam on the first attempt.