



Press Release
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Risk of Snakebites Increases During Summer Months

Knowing the signs of snakebite injuries and seeking help can save a life.

KNOX CITY, Texas (June 14, 2024) – With summer in full swing, Knox County residents are spending more time outdoors, increasing the risk of encountering venomous snakes. The county and its surrounding rural areas are home to several species of dangerous snakes, whose bites can lead to severe, sometimes fatal, health issues if not treated promptly.

“Many victims don’t even realize a snake is nearby until they’re bitten,” explained Dr. Ruth Ebangit at Knox City Clinic. “Knowing what to do immediately after a snakebite can be lifesaving.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that around 7,000 snakebite incidents are reported each year in the United States, with about 5% resulting in fatalities. The key to minimizing these risks is seeking swift medical intervention.

Recognizing and Responding to Snakebites

Snakebites often happen so quickly that the victim might not notice the snake. Dr. Ebangit advises the community to be aware of common symptoms: “Look for two puncture marks at the site of the bite, which will likely be surrounded by redness, swelling, and severe pain. Additional symptoms can include nausea, excessive sweating, difficulty breathing, and numbness or tingling.”

If bitten, try to note the snake’s color, shape, and pattern, as this can aid medical professionals in providing the correct treatment. However, there are specific actions to avoid after a snakebite:

Tourniquets should not be used because they can trap venom and dead cells in the affected area, exacerbating tissue damage. Similarly, cutting the wound or trying to suck out the venom is ineffective and can introduce infections or other complications. Ice and water immersion are also not recommended as they can worsen the tissue damage caused by the venom. Alcohol and caffeine should be avoided as they can speed up venom absorption into the bloodstream.

Instead, Dr. Ebangit recommends staying calm to slow the spread of venom. Position the bite below heart level while waiting for emergency medical assistance.

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Preventive Measures for Outdoor Safety

As outdoor activities increase, Dr. Ebangit emphasizes the importance of taking proactive steps to avoid snakebites. Handling snakes is never advisable. It's crucial to steer clear of potential snake habitats, such as rock piles, tall grass, and wood stacks. Wearing boots and long pants when hiking or working outdoors can provide additional protection.

In case of a snakebite, immediate medical attention is vital. Contact emergency services by calling 911 or head to the nearest hospital without delay. While fatal outcomes from snakebites are uncommon in Knox County, we have had several report bites in the past few years, and the complications can be serious.

"Snakebites are a significant concern that shouldn't be underestimated," Dr. Ebangit cautioned. "Attempting to 'wait it out' instead of seeking immediate medical help could have life-threatening consequences."

To learn more about local healthcare services available through Knox County Hospital District, please call 940-657-3535 or visit www.knoxhospital.org.

About Knox County Hospital District

Founded in 1926, Knox County Hospital District provides healthcare for residents of Knox County and surrounding areas. The district offers a wealth of medical services, including 24-hour emergency care, advanced radiology services, a clinical laboratory, home health, physical therapy, long-term care, patient education, and more. For additional information, please call 940-657-3535 or visit www.knoxhospital.org.

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