Venomous Snake Bites in Texas

Snakes are a fact of life in Texas, so you need to be careful. There are four kinds of venomous snakes in Texas: coral snakes, copperheads, cottonmouths, and rattlesnakes.

What Kinds of Snakes are in Texas?

**Coral Snake**

Multiple species of coral snakes are present in Texas, but only one is venomous. The coral snake is, in order, red, yellow, and black in color. Coral snakes have small mouths, and are around three feet in length. The coral snake is shy, and usually not aggressive. Some harmless snakes in Texas, including the milk snake, have similar color patterns to the coral snake to scare off predators. Remember the rhyme “red and yellow, kill a fellow” when you’re trying to determine the identity of a snake.

**Copperhead**

Copperhead snakes are found mostly on leaf-covered forest floor. The copperhead will have gray and brown bands with a copper colored head. The copperhead snake can easily be hidden in a pile of dead leaves, because of its excellent camouflage. Copperhead bites usually occur when a snake is accidentally picked up or stepped on. Always be careful when moving or picking up logs, rocks, and other areas where a snake may be resting.
Cottonmouth

The cottonmouth, also known as the water moccasin, can be found in and near marshes, swamps, ponds, lakes, ditches, and canals in East, Central, and Gulf Coast areas of Texas. Cottonmouths are long black snakes averaging around six feet in length. Inside the mouth of a cottonmouth is white like cotton, giving the cottonmouth its name. Cottonmouths have been known to be very aggressive, and defensive of the territory. These snakes can also bite under water giving extra concern to swimmers in Texas’ rivers and lakes.

Rattlesnake

Rattlesnakes are best known for their rattle on the end of their tail. Nine species of rattlesnake exist in Texas, all of them venomous. The average rattlesnake is three feet in length, and are usually brown and gray. The most common rattlesnake, the western diamondback, has brown diamond-shaped markings along the middle of its back. Rattlesnakes will use their rattle when threatened, but if surprised they will strike or bite before rattling. Rattlesnakes are active at night when they are harder to spot, and will rest during the sunny hours of the day. Use caution when moving rocks or logs where rattlesnakes may be resting during the day.

How do I Avoid Snake Bites?

- Wear knee high boots, or at least canvas tennis shoes
- Wear heavy leather gloves
- Watch where you step, put your hands, or sit down
- Be careful around rocks, wood piles, or other places for snakes to sun
- Snakes will bite if they feel trapped or threatened

How do I Treat a Snake Bite?

1. Identify the type of snake if possible, take a photo and bring it with you to the hospital
2. Get away from the snake
3. Call 911 and follow instructions from dispatcher
4. Immobilize the affected body part, and keep limb below heart level
5. Remove all rings or restrictive jewelry on affected limb, since snakebites often cause swelling
6. Get to a hospital or healthcare facility as quickly as you can. Do not wait and watch for symptoms.
What not to do:

- Do not apply a tourniquet
- Do not suck the venom
- Do not apply cold substance directly to the bite
- Do not wash the wound with soap and water

In conclusion, don’t be careless when around venomous snakes in Texas. It is always best to seek immediate medical attention when someone is bitten by a potentially venomous snake. Learning how to avoid snakes, and what to do when bitten will be valuable knowledge in an emergency.
Work Cited


