

How to avoid snakebites

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If you live in a country with venomous snakes, or are travelling to one, here are a few tips to avoid being bitten.

Do not provoke

Snakes usually will not attack unless they feel threatened. In the bush, wear sturdy leather shoes and stomp heavily when walking, striking with a stick on the ground in front of you to warn any reptiles you are coming—they will most likely just slither away.

Most strikes occur when snakes feel cornered or under threat, or when people accidentally step on them.

Be alert and prepared

Outside, have a good look around you for snakes that may hang from tree branches or swim in water, and be careful when turning over rocks or other objects. And remember: snakes are evolved to be well-camouflaged in their environment, whether it be the desert, forest or bush.

Thick, [protective gloves](#) are recommended for gardening and farming.

Carry a lamp at night.

Birds can help too: Many species possess an alarm cry to alert others of hidden danger.

Inside, check your bed and dark corners—snakes can enter homes in pursuit of prey, heat or water.

The neater your home, the more likely you will spot an out-of-place [snake](#). A mosquito net around your bed can be an effective snake repellent.

Once bitten

If you or someone else is bitten, try and remember the colour and shape of the snake, and seek immediately medical care at a clinic or hospital.

Remove any bracelets, rings or watches that may hamper [blood flow](#) in case of swelling.

Do NOT try and catch the snake, apply a tourniquet, cut the wound, suck out the venom, or drink alcohol or coffee.

Also do not seek to inject your own antivenom, which can induce a violent allergic reaction and needs to be administered in a professional environment with adrenaline and oxygen on hand.

Sources: Doctors Without Borders, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Action International, Bio-Ken research centre.

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