



# Virginia Herpetological Society

## Venomous Snakebite Information

Virginia has 3 native venomous snakes:

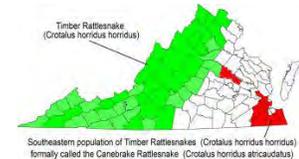
Northern Copperhead



Eastern Cottonmouth



Timber Rattlesnake



About 8,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes a year in the US, 5-10 people die. In contrast, 15,000 to 20,000 die every year from the side effects of aspirin. Venomous snake bites are medical emergencies, and they can be deadly if not treated quickly. However, the chances of being envenomated are extremely low. Getting the person to an emergency room as quickly as possible is the very best treatment. If properly treated, many snakebites will not have serious effects.

### First Aid

- 1) Get medical help immediately. Call 911. Keep the person calm.
- 2) Mark the place of the bite, and write the time of the bite on the person with a Sharpie.
- 3) Restrict movement, create a loose splint to help restrict movement of the area.
- 4) Keep the affected area below heart level to reduce the flow of venom.
- 5) Remove any rings or constricting items because the affected area may swell.
- 6) Monitor the person's vital signs -- temperature, pulse, rate of breathing and for signs of shock (such as paleness), lay the person flat, raise the feet about a foot, and cover the person with a blanket.
- 7) If swelling occurs, mark the extent of the swelling with a marker, and write the time.
- 8) Apply a bandage, wrapped two to four inches above the bite, to help slow the venom. This should not cut off the flow of blood from a vein or artery - the band should be loose enough to slip a finger under it. Once a pressure bandage has been applied, it should not be removed until the patient has reached a medical professional.

### Do Not

- DO NOT allow the person to become over-exerted. If necessary, carry the person to safety.
- DO NOT apply a tourniquet.
- DO NOT apply cold compresses to a snake bite.
- DO NOT cut into a snake bite with a knife or razor.
- DO NOT try to suction the venom by mouth.
- DO NOT give the person stimulants or pain medications unless instructed to do so by a doctor.
- DO NOT give the person anything by mouth, except water
- DO NOT raise the site of the bite above the level of the person's heart.