

Venomous Snakes in Texas

There are two types of venomous snakes found in Texas. First, pit vipers are the most common type of venomous snakes in Texas and include the copperhead, cottonmouth and rattlesnake. Pit vipers



get their name from the infrared radiation receptors located in a “pit” on each side of the snake’s face. Additionally, pit viper pupils are vertically elliptical and they have a single row of scales located on the underside of their tail.

The second type of venomous snake found in Texas is the coral snake. Coral snakes are members of a group of snakes called Elapids that are characterized by having a short, permanently erect fang located along each side of the upper-jaw. However, the coral snake does not have to “chew” its victim to inflict a painfully venomous bite. The Texas Coral Snake is the only member of the Elapids that is found in Texas and can easily be identified by the red, yellow and black color bands along the snake’s body. The Texas Coral Snake is the only snake in Texas with touching red and yellow bands.

What to do if you are bitten by a snake:

- Move the victim safely away from the snake. If you see the snake, try to remember what it looks like or take a digital picture of it if you can do so without putting yourself at risk. This will aid the doctor in determining which antivenin is needed.
- Do not attempt to capture the snake; however if the snake is dead, place it in a suitable container and bring it with you to the hospital for identification. Be careful to avoid contact with the dead snake’s head however, as it may be able to bite reflexively for a short time after death.
- Keep the victim, and yourself, calm.
- Remove jewelry or constricting clothing from the victim quickly, before any swelling begins.
- Lift the bitten limb so that it is level with the heart. Raising it above heart level could hasten distribution of the venom to other parts of the body. Holding the limb below heart level could lead to increased swelling of the affected limb.
- Limit movement of the bitten limb and avoid any unnecessary exertion by bringing transport to the victim, if possible.
- Gently wash the bite wound with soap and water, if available.
- Call 911 if available and seek medical attention immediately. If you are transporting the victim to a hospital, call ahead so that the medical staff can prepare the antivenin for administration upon arrival.