

## **On the Topic of Snakebites**

**By Joseph Parish**

Wandering around in the woods has its own variety of hazards according to the season of the year as well as the location. When considering snakes, you won't find a lot running loose in the winter months here in Delaware, however, if you bug out to your retreat say in Arizona you will likely encounter the creatures at any time of the year.

Under normal conditions your chances of being bite by a snake are extremely slim. First off, unless you have encountered a Black mamba most snakes will attempt to escape from an encounter with a human. They are just as scared of you as you may be of them. Even when traveling in snake infested territory your chances are small if you are familiar with snakes at all.

Notice I said usually for it is entirely possible to be bite, and in such a case you should know what to do in order to minimize the impact from the snake. Generally, deaths resulting from snakes are frequently rare. Usually over half of the victims who have been bit have no poison in their system what so ever while only a third will develop any sort of serious reaction. The biggest downfall of a snake bite is the decrease in morale or in the event that no one knows how to deal with the issue when it is encountered. As survivalists we must be familiar with the necessary steps involved in treating the bites in order to limit the damage to tissues around the snakebite area.

Always look at any bite whether it is from snake, animal or human as a potential source of infection. A snake does not need to be poisonous in order to infect a person from its bite. For those snakes which are of a poisonous nature the venom will quickly attack the central nervous system and seriously hamper the blood circulation, but will also be affected by the digestive enzymes which aid the snake in digesting their prey. The poisons found in some snakes can cause large areas of tissue damage resulting in large open wound spaces. If the bites are untreated these conditions can lead to possible amputation of the limb, as well as the development of shock, or panic within the person bitten by the snake.

Factors which can affect the successful recovery of a bite victim are undue excitement, or hysteria, which can elevate the circulation within the body, and cause the toxin to be distributed quicker. The signs of shock often occur within 30 minutes of being bit.

Prior to beginning any snake bite treatment, we must determine whether or not the snake was poisonous. Bites experienced from a nonpoisonous snake usually show rows of teeth. Those bites from the poisonous snake will not only show rows of teeth but also several puncture marks created by the penetration of the fangs. A poisonous snake bite will cause bleeding from both the nose and the anus; you will find blood within the urine, and extreme pain at the location of the bite contributing to considerable swelling. These symptoms will appear anytime from 2 minutes to 2 hours after the snake has bit you.

With a poisonous snake bite, you will find it difficult to breathe, you will feel paralysis setting in, get extremely weak, start twitching, and your body will begin to get numb. The following steps should be taken immediately:

Keep the victim still and treat for shock while forcing fluids into him. Remove any constricting items such as rings, watches, etc. Clean the area of the bite well. If breathing is starting to get difficult maintain an airway, and if necessary, administer CPR. Use some form of constricting band between the heart and the bite wound.

Never provide the victim with alcohol or tobacco products. Don't provide the patient with any kind of morphine, and avoid making deep cuts on the bite.