

Subject: Treatment – All Providers
Snakebite (Pit Viper) Treatment Policy

I. REGIONAL FOCUS

- A. Primary venomous species: Northern Pacific Rattlesnake (*Crotalus oreganus*).
- B. Assume envenomation in all suspected bites unless clearly a dry bite.

II. RECOGNITION

- A. Fang marks (may be subtle)
- B. Immediate or delayed pain and swelling
- C. Progressive edema
- D. Bruising, blistering
- E. Nausea, vomiting
- F. Hypotension or altered mental status (severe)

III. BLS Interventions:

- A. Scene safety – avoid further bites
- B. Keep patient calm and limit movement
- C. Position supine
- D. Immobilize affected limb (splint) Keep limb at heart level
- E. Remove constrictive items (rings, clothing)
- F. Mark leading edge of swelling with time
- G. Oxygen as needed
- H. Rapid transport

IV. ALS Interventions:

- A. Cardiac monitor
- B. Establish IV/IO access (prefer unaffected limb)
- C. Monitor for shock
- D. Treat hypotension with fluids
- E. Pain management per protocol
- F. Consider antiemetics
- G. Early hospital notification (possible antivenom need)

V. ABSOLUTE Contraindications:

- A. Do NOT apply tourniquet
- B. Do NOT cut or suction the wound
- C. Do NOT apply ice
- D. Do NOT elevate limb above heart level

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VI. CRITICAL SIGNS (HIGH RISK)

- A. Rapidly spreading swelling
- B. Systemic symptoms (vomiting, hypotension)
- C. Bleeding or coagulopathy
- D. Neurologic symptoms

VII. TRANSPORT DESTINATION

- A. Transport to closest appropriate facility.
- B. Prefer hospitals capable of managing envenomation and administering antivenom.
- C. Early notification is critical.

VIII. DOCUMENTATION

- A. Time of bite
- B. Location of bite
- C. Progression of swelling (times marked)
- D. Symptoms and vital signs
- E. Treatments provided

IX. QIP Audit Criteria

- A. Failure to recognize signs of envenomation or severity progression (e.g., swelling, pain, systemic symptoms).
- B. Deviation from immobilization and limb positioning standards.
- C. Use of contraindicated or harmful interventions (e.g., tourniquet, incision/suction, or ice).
- D. Delay in transport or inappropriate destination selection.
- E. Incomplete or inaccurate documentation of bite characteristics and progression.