VENOMOUS SNAKE IDENTIFICATION
As a resident of the southeastern United States, it is important that you learn to identify those regional species that may pose a threat to humans. Then, by process of elimination, all others can be recognized as harmless (nonvenomous). Knowing the following characteristics is helpful.

CORALSNAKE - Red and yellow rings touch (every other ring yellow). Similar non-venomous species have red and black rings or blotches touching (every other ring black).
RATTLESNAKES, COTTONMOUTH, AND COPPERHEAD - Pupils elliptical, sensory pit present between nostril and eye, most scales on underside of tail single like belly scales, not divided. DON’T RELY ON TRIANGULAR HEAD.

The easiest way to recognize the six venomous species is to learn their patterns and coloration, much as you do common birds.

VENOMOUS SNAKE IDENTIFICATION

TO AVOID BEING BITTEN
1. Don’t put your hands or feet in places you cannot see or have not examined. Do not turn over rocks, logs, or trash with your hands.
2. Don’t crawl under fences, buildings, or other objects without carefully looking under them.
3. In the wild, don’t sit, stand or walk without looking.
4. Don’t wear low-cut shoes or swim in areas known to be infested with venomous snakes.
5. Don’t gather firewood after dark or without looking carefully.
6. Don’t sleep on the ground near woodpiles, cave entrances, or swampy areas.
7. Don’t be careless when moving boats left on shore for several hours.
8. Don’t disturb snakes, or unnecessarily try to kill them.
9. Don’t handle ‘dead’ snakes with your hands.
10. Don’t attempt to capture snakes unless you are skilled.
11. Don’t get within a snake’s striking distance while trying to identify it.
12. Don’t travel alone in snake-infested areas.
13. Don’t stay near a snake if it bites you.
14. Don’t forget that venomous snakes can climb trees, can bite under water, do occur in high altitudes, and may enter saltwater.

EMERGENCY TREATMENT
1. Calm and reassure the victim; don’t panic.
2. Remove all rings, bracelets, or other constricting items.
3. Immobilize the bitten area as much as circumstances allow. Keep the bitten area at or below heart level.
4. Take victim to medical facility as quickly as possible. CALL AHEAD TO EMERGENCY ROOM YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY. This is a medical emergency, and they need to prepare.

NOTE:
- Do not give victim any drink or food by mouth.
- Do not use a constriction band or tourniquet in the absence of an obviously severe envenomation.
- Do not place ice on bitten extremity, and don’t use electric shock.
- Do not make any cuts. Instead; use THE EXTRACTOR®. manufactured by Sawyer, and recommended by some physicians skilled in venomous snakebite treatment. This instrument may remove venom by suction without the use of incisions.
- Only a physician should administer antivenom.
- If feasible, bring dead snake for positive identification (use caution - don’t get bitten again!)

SNAKEBITE STATISTICS
Most snakebites are by non-venomous species. Of all the bites by venomous snakes, 25-50% do not inject any venom. MORE IMPORTANT, MORTALITY IS LESS THAN 1% FOR PHYSICIAN TREATED VENOMOUS SNAKEBITES IN THE UNITED STATES.

IDENTIFICATION AID
Snakes pictured are generally typical; however, some variation in color and markings does occur. If in doubt, consult an identification expert.

VENOMOUS SNAKEBITE MANAGEMENT CONSULTATION
Check with your local emergency rooms to ensure that they have medical experience with venomous snakebites.

INFORMATION ABOUT AVAILABLE ANTIVENOMS
(including exotic species)

Arizona Poison Center (Clearinghouse) (520) 626-6016
Alabama Regional Poison Control Center (205) 938-9201
Florida Poison Information Center (813) 253-4444
Georgia Poison Center (404) 616-9000
Louisiana Poison Control Center (318) 342-3648
Texas State Poison Center (214) 589-0911

NOTE:
- Do not rely on triangular head.
- Pupils elliptical, sensory pit present between nostril and eye, most scales on underside of tail single like belly scales, not divided.
- Pit Vipers - Venomous
- Round Pupil
- Nonvenous (except coral snake)
- Elliptical Pupil
- No Pupil

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