



Public Health Press Release

July 28, 2010

Amador Public Health, 10877 Conductor Blvd, Ste 400 Sutter Creek, CA 95685
Phone (209) 223-6407 Fax (209)223-1562
publichealth@co.amador.ca.us

Rattlesnake Bites at Record Number

Jackson, Ca. Seven Amador County residents required treatment at Sutter Amador Hospital for rattlesnake bites this year.

“Six of those victims were admitted to the hospital and required anti-venom,” according to Eduardo Morin, PharmD, Pharmacy Director at Sutter Amador Hospital.

Dr. Bob Hartmann, Amador County Public Health Officer, notes that the emergency dept usually sees three to four bite victims per year. “No one keeps official statistics, but the most we can remember in any year is seven. We’re already there and the season’s only half over.”

A recent bay area news paper article suggested that there are more rattlesnakes this year because of the late, wet spring and more small rodents which are their main source of food.

More bites occur in the hand, when the person is attempting to pick up the snake or working in brush or wood piles. Alcohol consumption is involved in over 50% of bites.

Symptoms are usually pain and stinging at the site, swelling, oozing of blood from bite and bruising. Sometimes a person will have a metallic or mint taste in the mouth or muscle twitching.

There about 8,000 venomous snake bites per year in the United States. Only about five to six people die from rattlesnake bites per year.

If bitten, the best thing you can do is get to the emergency room right away. Fortunately Sutter Amador Hospital keeps an adequate supply of anti-venom on hand.

More bites occur in the hand, when a person is attempting to pick up the snake or working in brush or wood piles.

Field Treatment

If a Bite Occurs:

- Be Calm
- Remove jewelry and constrictive clothing.
- Immobilize limb in level position.
- Find car keys and cell phone.
- Get to emergency room.

Do NOT:

- Cut and Suck.
- Apply ice.
- Apply tourniquet.

Symptoms are usually pain and stinging at the site, swelling, oozing of blood from bite and bruising. Sometimes a person will have a metallic or mint taste in the mouth or muscle twitching.

Rattlesnake Bites at Record Number (cont.)

“The anti-venom is very effective and most victims require six to ten vials given intravenously,” says Dr. Morin. “The hospital stay is one to two days and most people recover without long lasting effects.” Dr. Morin notes that the cost of the anti-venom is close to \$2,000 per vial.

Dr. Hartmann adds that, “The only rattle snake native to this area is the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake. Therefore, it’s not important to catch the snake. Actually it is more dangerous to attempt that. Every year someone brings a rattlesnake to the emergency room and it stirs up a little commotion.”

Prevention is the best medicine:

- Never handle snakes – dead or alive.
- Know the habitat where the snakes live: wood piles, brush.
- Know snake habits – out more at dusk and dawn.
- Keep rattlesnake enemies around: dogs, cats, guinea hens, and pigs.
- Wear boots and long pants.
- Trim bushes and shrubs so you can clearly see underneath.

The cost of anti-venom is close to \$2,000 per vial.
