



LANGEBAAN
COUNTRY ESTATE

Langebaan Country Estate

SNAKE BITES – USEFUL INFORMATION

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Excerpt from
Noodhulp vir die Suid-Afrikaanse Huis, Werkplek en Buitelewe, Vlakke 1 - 3
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1. Introduction

Langebaan Country Estate is a beautiful natural environment and the Developer has gone to great lengths to implement policies to nurture and enhance this natural environment. One of the consequences of such a healthy environment is the proliferation and thriving of flora and fauna natural to this area. This includes many species of snakes, including species that can be potentially dangerous on account of venomous bites. This includes, but is not limited to Cape Cobra, Boomslang, Puff Adder, Rinkhals and others.

This document is for information purposes only and is intended as a guide, but in all instances of a snake bite or suspected bite, residents are implored to contact and obtain professional medical advice and assistance as soon as possible.

Whilst numerous snakes have been encountered on LCE and relocated, there is not a single recorded incident of a snake bite in twenty years.

2. Interesting facts

- The Puff Adder is most responsible for snake bites locally
- Snakes are most active during spring and autumn, after the first rain of the season and at sunset
- Most snake bites to humans occur on the lower leg
- A snake that feels threatened, releases more venom than a non-threatened snake
- If no bite mark is visible, no venom has been injected. A so-called "dry bite" leaves only scratch marks
- The sooner a patient experiences symptoms of systemic reaction, the more life threatening the situation
- Children bitten by a snake have a higher mortality rate than adults
- A pregnant lady bitten by a snake should be treated as high priority, snake bites frequently lead to a miscarriage
- When encountering a snake, freeze. If the snake does not move away, slowly reverse and do not make any sudden movements, which can lead to an attack
- Try to remember the appearance of the snake if you cannot correctly identify it
- Snake bites can be divided into three groups, each with its own symptoms and treatment:

a. Tissue-toxic

Snakes: Adders, for example Puff Adder and Horn Adder

Signs and symptoms

- Reaction mostly localized
- Serious pain, that will become worse, appears within minutes
- The bite area swells up within minutes, blisters may appear and swelling can spread to entire limb and to rest of body



- Bleeding and tissue damage occur in affected area and blood can appear in bodily fluids
- Advanced signs: gangrene, nausea and vomiting, shock, respiratory failure, death

b. Toxic to nervous system

Snakes: Cobra, Mamba

The nervous system is affected, heart and respiratory muscles are paralysed and death can follow

Signs and symptoms

- Slight burning and swelling in bite area
- Systemic reaction: restlessness, desire to sleep, eyelids sagging, disturbed vision, enlarged pupils, generalized weakness, shivering and perspiration
- Paralysed facial muscles will lead to affected speech
- Pain in chest and difficult breathing and some venom, such as Cape Cobra venom, will have a direct effect on the heart
- Unconsciousness, respiratory failure, convulsions, coma and death can follow within minutes

c. Venom affecting blood clotting

Snakes: Boomslang

Blood clotting mechanism is affected which leads to serious bleeding and haemorrhage

Signs and symptoms

- Localised reaction: initially only vague pain because of the bite, after some time bloody serum may seep from the wound
- Systemic reaction: dizziness, nausea, vomiting, serious headache
- Advanced signs and symptoms: blood in all bodily fluids and sub-cutaneous (blueish colour under skin), within 24 - 48 hours after attack convulsions and death can follow

3. Treatment for snake bites

- Secure the scene, most snakes will still be within 10 meters of where the attack occurred
 - Ensure that person has actually been bitten, look for fang marks and spit signs
 - Put pressure on the bite with your hand
 - Keep patient calm to slow heart rate
 - Transport to hospital immediately and give description of snake
 - Do not use a tourniquet
- a. If unsure about kind of snake, or if it was not an Adder**
- Remove patient's shoes, but not the clothes



- Keep patient calm and do not allow him/her to move, venom will spread quicker with movement
- Transport to hospital immediately
- Monitor breathing and circulation
- Keep limbs at same level as heart
- Do not ever use a tourniquet

b. If it was an Adder (bite marks swells up immediately)

- Keep the limb elevated
- Patient must lie down, keep him/her calm and do not allow him/her to move
- Transport to hospital immediately

c. General notes

- Do not give any medication
- Monitor circulation, especially in affected limb
- Monitor breathing
- Start rescue breathing and CPR as soon as is necessary

d. DO NOT

- Rub or massage affected area
- Cut the bite mark
- Apply ice or warm packs
- Apply anything to wound
- Give alcohol
- Give any medication

4. Venom in eyes

- Spitting cobras can spit up to three meters

a. Signs and symptoms

- Pain in eyes

b. Treatment

- Use running water to wash out eyes immediately, lift eyelids to wash under lids, patient should roll his eyes while it is washed out
- Wash out continuously for 10 - 15 minutes
- If no water is available, use any liquid, such as milk, beer, cold tea, urine, saliva
- After the eye has been rinsed for 15 minutes, transport to hospital
- No medication should be given