

# Rattlesnakes

## Rattlesnake Prevention



### **What should I do if I encounter a rattlesnake?**

Leave it alone. Most bites occur when individuals or dogs provoke the rattlesnake or if you try to capture or kill it. Rattlesnakes only bite or attack in self-defense, so the best way to avoid being bitten is to leave the rattlesnake alone. *In 1988 two doctors at the University of Southern California Medical Center analyzed 227 cases of venomous snakebite, covering more than a decade, and found that 44 percent occurred during accidental contact, such as stepping on the animal. More than 55 percent, however, resulted from the victim's grabbing or handling the creatures, and in 28 percent of these cases, the victims were intoxicated. The doctors' conclusion was that the typical snakebite victim is male and under thirty, with a blood-alcohol concentration of more than 0.1 percent at the time he is bitten. Yet only 0.2 percent of all snakebite victims die each year, and most of them receive no medical treatment or first aid. (Steve Grenard, Aug. '00)*

Many people spend a lifetime hunting, fishing or otherwise enjoying the outdoors and never see a rattlesnake. Very few people are actually bitten by rattlesnakes, yet because the bite is extremely painful and can be fatal, you should always keep alert and watch where you step or put your hands when you are in the field. Be careful after dark as well, for on warm nights rattlesnakes are out and about searching for food.

Most rattlesnakes, when disturbed, normally try to withdraw, but if they think they are cornered, the explosive sizzling buzz of their rattle is an unmistakable warning to retreat and is a sound that will long be remembered.

If you need help with a venomous bite or if you have a poisoning emergency, call your Poison Center immediately.

**If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911.** Poison Centers across the country now have a new national emergency phone number - **1-800-222-1222**

### **Tips To Avoid Rattlesnakes**

- Be sure to walk or hike in areas where you can see the path and where you step or reach with your hands.
- Use a walking stick or other device to rustle the shrubs along the side of route to alert snakes of your presence.
- Wear high boots or hiking boots, long pants and gloves (when using your hands to move rocks or brush).
- Don't put your hands or feet in areas where you cannot see such as on a ledge, in a crevice and use caution when you pick up rocks or debris where a rattlesnake may be hiding.