



## Wilderness First Aid Scenario

# SNAKEBITE

### Victim 1 – Snakebite to Hand

#### SUMMARY

You and your buddy are walking down the trail on a weekend hiking trip with your troop. You are 8 miles into a 10-mile hike. You see a snake in the path and decide to move it out of the way to keep others from encountering it. Even though you have identified the snake as a copperhead, you use a stick to hold it still as your buddy reaches down to catch it. The stick slips, and the snake bites your buddy on the hand.

The troop is about 30 miles away from the local community hospital and about a 30-minute walk from the trailhead.

#### SCENARIO DETAIL

Many of the troop members have cell phones with them, but phone service in the area is intermittent. Initially, your buddy's vital signs show only an increased respiratory rate. However, as anxiousness increases and the venom is circulated throughout the body over time, the vital signs change.

#### STUDENT RESPONSE

1. Scene safety:

Ensure that the scene safety assessment is completed, including making sure that everyone keeps away from the snake if it is still nearby. Use disposable medical gloves when dressing the wound.

2. Primary assessment:

The bitten Scout is awake and alert.

3. Secondary assessment:

a. Physical exam: Examine the bitten area. Signs to look for: puncture wounds, swelling, and discoloration.

b. Vital signs:

Initial: A&Ox4, heart rate 80, respirations 28, skin color normal except at bite site (reddened).

Second set of vital signs after 10 minutes: A&Ox4, heart rate 100, respirations 32, skin color the same with complaints of pain and burning at the bite site.

c. **SAMPLE**

**S** – As above

**A** – No known allergies

**M** – None

**P** – None

**L** – Lunch; voided approximately two hours ago

**E** – Hiking a mountain trail, picking up a venomous snake

#### POST-SCENARIO DEBRIEF

- Did the troop check the scene for safety issues such as the snake that got away, other snakes, and other wildlife?  
**Discuss what information to tell advanced caregivers about the snake.**
- What signs and symptoms did you find?  
**Two bite marks, discoloration of the skin, and burning pain at the site. Changing vital signs and level of consciousness, and changes at the wound site.**
- What is the individual's problem?  
**Venomous snakebite from a copperhead.**



## **+** Wilderness First Aid Scenario **Snakebite**

- How would you provide care?  
***Keep the victim quiet. Immobilize the bite site if possible. Wash the wound with soap and water, then apply a bandage if this does not slow evacuation. Seek medical help immediately. Carry the victim out if possible; otherwise, walk them out. As vital signs change, does the care change?***
- What items do you need?  
***Items to immobilize the bite site, soap and water, bandages, nonlatex gloves.***
- What would happen if the wound were left untreated?  
***Possibility of infection, possibility of severe reaction to the venom.***
- Does the situation require an evacuation?  
***Yes. Discuss how and when advanced care was provided. Discuss with the students the importance of having only one point of contact because the entire crew may have cell phones. Discuss how to avoid multiple people calling for help at the same time, and how that could slow the emergency response. Also discuss Scouts contacting others (parents and friends for example) about the snake bite during the event and after advanced care is received.***