



Clinical Practice Guidelines: Toxicology and toxinology/Envenomation – Snake

Policy code	CPG_TO_SNB_1222
Date	December, 2022
Purpose	To ensure a consistent approach to the management of snake bite.
Scope	Applies to Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) clinical staff.
Health care setting	Pre-hospital assessment and treatment.
Population	Applies to all ages unless stated otherwise.
Source of funding	Internal – 100%
Author	Clinical Quality & Patient Safety Unit, QAS
Review date	December, 2025
Information security	UNCLASSIFIED – Queensland Government Information Security Classification Framework.
URL	https://ambulance.qld.gov.au/clinical.html

While the QAS has attempted to contact all copyright owners, this has not always been possible. The QAS would welcome notification from any copyright holder who has been omitted or incorrectly acknowledged.

All feedback and suggestions are welcome. Please forward to: Clinical.Guidelines@ambulance.qld.gov.au

Disclaimer

The Digital Clinical Practice Manual is expressly intended for use by appropriately qualified QAS clinicians when performing duties and delivering ambulance services for, and on behalf of, the QAS.

The QAS disclaims, to the maximum extent permitted by law, all responsibility and all liability (including without limitation, liability in negligence) for all expenses, losses, damages and costs incurred for any reason associated with the use of this manual, including the materials within or referred to throughout this document being in any way inaccurate, out of context, incomplete or unavailable.

© State of Queensland (Queensland Ambulance Service) 2022.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives V4.0 International License

You are free to copy and communicate the work in its current form for non-commercial purposes, as long as you attribute the State of Queensland, Queensland Ambulance Service and comply with the licence terms. If you alter the work, you may not share or distribute the modified work. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.en>

Envenomation – Snake

December, 2022

Australia has some of the most venomous snakes in the world including brown, tiger, black, taipan, death adder and sea snakes. All of these snakes are found in Queensland.

All patients with a history of snake bite or possible snake bite should be transported to hospital for assessment and management as envenomation can be life-threatening. Most snake bites do not result in envenomation.

Clinical features



Symptoms of envenomation include:^[1,2]

- Local effect
 - Local pain, swelling, bruising
 - Regional lymphadenopathy
- Systemic symptoms
 - nausea, vomiting, headache, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, diaphoresis
- Sudden collapse
- Neurotoxicity
 - Ptosis, blurred vision, dysarthria
 - Descending flaccid paralysis
- Coagulopathy
 - Bleeding from bite site, cannula sites, gums

Clinical features (cont.)



- Myotoxicity
 - Muscle pain/tenderness
- Thrombotic microangiopathy
 - Renal impairment
 - Haemolytic anaemia
 - Low platelets

Risk assessment



- Do not attempt to capture or injure the snake.
- Snake envenomation may occur without definite puncture marks. The wound may resemble a scratch or superficial lacerations.

+ Additional information

- Early administration of antivenom is recommended in cases of snake envenomation. Early pre-notification to the receiving hospital should occur in cases of suspected snake envenomation.^[3]

