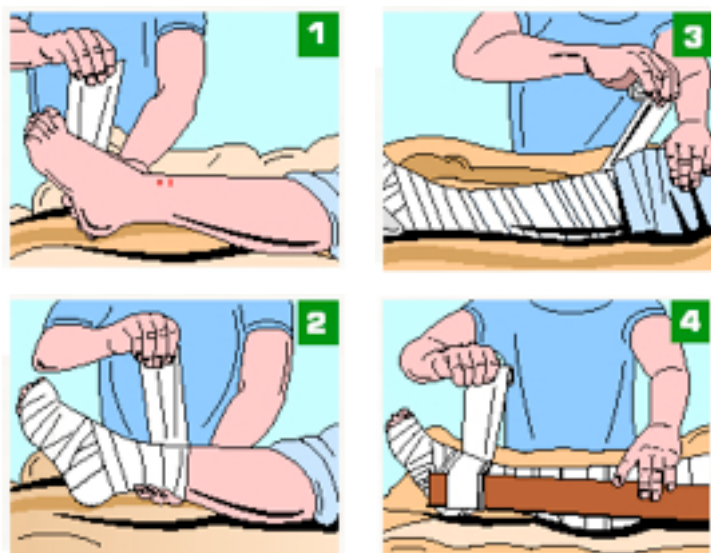


SNAKE BITE



Pressure immobilisation bandage

It is difficult to tell if a patient has been bitten by a snake. A serious snake bite may just look like a scratch and symptoms may not start for many hours. Also it can be difficult to distinguish the early symptoms of snake bite (nausea, dizziness, and headache) from anxiety.

Australian snake venoms have three main effects.

- Paralysis - causing drooping eyelids then shallow breathing.
- Coagulopathy - patients bleed from bite site and internally.
- Muscle breakdown - causing pain and turning urine red.

Scenario

An 22-year old employee has been asked to repair a fence at a distant corner of the industrial site. While walking through long grass he feels a sting on his left calf. He did not see a snake at the time, but earlier that day he says that he saw a brown snake. He calls the medical centre on his mobile phone. He is feeling nauseous and has some tingling in his right foot.

Task

Some of you will be asked to tackle a similar practice scenario this month.

Discuss your approach with your colleagues before then.

Question

Why is it important not to wash the bite site?

Step-by-step

- ★ **Arrange for ALL patients with possible snake bite to be transferred to hospital.**
- ★ **Immediately apply a broad compressive bandage to the bite site at same pressure as for a sprain.**
- ★ **Extend the bandage to cover the whole of the bitten limb including fingers/toes.**
- ★ **Mark the bite site on the bandage.**
- ★ **Splint limb and immobilise.**
- ★ **Keep the patient still and bring transport to the patient.**
- ★ **Do not give food or use a tourniquet.**
- ★ **DO NOT WASH OR CLEAN THE WOUND.**
- ★ **Record vital signs.**
- ★ **Record symptoms, including time of onset.**

