

First Aid in the bush

If you are working in the Australian Bush, you need to keep an eye out for ticks and snakes and other 'bities'.



1. Ticks

If you get bitten by a tick it's important to remove the tick without annoying it or squeezing it because in both cases this agitation leads to more toxin being added to your system. Modern thinking is that a lighted match, kerosene, your fingers, household tweezers, nail polish remover, oils, alcohol etc will agitate the tick and should not be used.

Ether best to remove ticks - Freeze don't squeeze!



An ether-based spray such as Wart Off Freeze Spray, Tick Off or Tick Tox will freeze the tick so it can be removed in about 10 minutes. See the 1 min 47 secs ABC Catalyst Program: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i77nrTVM_j8

Tick removing tool

If you don't have an ether spray, use a tick removing tool instead of tweezers because it will reduce how much the tick is squeezed and agitated.



Small tick at Nymph or larval stage

Permethrin (5%) containing creams such as Lyclear is a topical cream that can be applied to a small tick or multiple ticks. They will be paralysed and drop off after thirty minutes to an hour.



2. Snakes

Snakes like Carpet Pythons and Diamond Pythons are not venomous. So, while their bite might be painful, there is no venom. There are about 23 species of snakes on the mid north coast and five genus of snakes that could seriously harm us - Browns, Blacks, Adders, Tigers and Taipans. It's a good idea to seek medical attention regardless of the type of snake.

The following information is taken from an article by Rob Timmings who runs a medical/nursing education business which is published on Facebook – see #ECT4Health

When bitten, a snake injects some venom into the meat of your limb (i.e. NOT into your blood). This venom is therefore transported via the lymphatic system, not the blood stream. While the heart pumps blood around even if you are lying still, lymph fluid moves around with physical muscle movement like bending your arm, bending knees, wriggling fingers and toes, walking/exercise etc.

So stay still!!! Venom can't move if the victim doesn't move. The only way the venom can get into your blood stream is to be moved from the bite site in the lymphatic vessels. The only way to do this is to physically move the limbs that were bitten.

Apply pressure immobilisation bandaging to further retard venom movement /lymph transport toward the blood stream. A firm roll bandage is applied directly over the bite site (don't wash the area), over the top of clothes, to an area about 10cm above and below the bite. Mark the bite site if you can.



Then using another elastic roller bandage, apply a firm wrap from Fingers/toes all the way to the armpit/groin. The bandage needs to be firm, but not so tight that it causes fingers or toes to turn purple or white. About the tension of a sprain bandage. Splint the limb using a rigid item such as a stick or magazine, so the patient can't walk or bend the limb.

Remember to stay calm.

Watch an on-line video or two so you will know what to do!

- **Do not cut, incise or suck the venom.**
- **Do not EVER use a tourniquet**
- **Don't remove the shirt or pants - just bandage over the top of clothing. Remember movement (like wriggling out of a shirt or pants) causes venom movement.**
- **Do not try to catch, kill or identify the snake!!! This is important. Hospitals NO LONGER NEED to know the type of snake; it doesn't change treatment. The new Antivenom, Polyvalent, neutralises the venoms of all the 5 listed snake genera, so it doesn't matter what venomous snake it was.**

3. Leeches

Leeches introduce an anticoagulant so that they can feed on the victim's blood, but their bite is usually painless. **Application of salt, salt water or vinegar** to an actively sucking leech will cause it to fall off, or it will usually fall off by itself after about 20 minutes. It's best not to pull the leech off as the skin may be torn and ulceration may follow, or parts of the jaw may remain and set up infection. After the leech has been removed, wash with soap and water. If necessary, apply a cold pack and take a simple analgesic to relieve pain or swelling. Apply pressure if there is bleeding from the bite.

4. Spiders

Spider bites are painful (unlike most snake bites) but most spider bites will only cause a local reaction which includes pain, redness, swelling and heat. **Wash the bite area with soap and water, apply a cold pack and take a simple analgesic such as paracetamol.** A pressure bandage is not needed and may make the pain worse. Medical attention may be required, especially if the bite has not cleared up in 2-3 days or if there are signs of infection or tissue damage.

5. Funnel-web spiders

Unlike other spider bites, Funnel Web Spider bites and Mouse Spider bites **require pressure bandages and a splint to be applied** – in a similar way to snake bites. Hospitals have the Funnel Web antivenom so call an ambulance and keep calm and still while you are waiting. It's unusual to get bitten by a mouse spider but the Funnel Web antivenom seems to work.

6. Insect stings

The treatment for most insect stings and bites e.g. from bull ants, is the same as for most spider bites i.e. **wash the bite area with soap and water, apply a cold pack and take a simple analgesic such as paracetamol.** Bites or stings from insects can cause a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) in some people so seek medical help if necessary.

Disclaimer

This information is provided in good faith from information readily available on the internet. It should not be relied on. People should do their own research and seek expert advice.