

Eeek! A Snake!

What To Do If You Get Bitten

Every year in the United States thousands of people are bitten by snakes, and approximately 10 people die as a result. If you are bitten by a venomous snake follow these guidelines:

- ◆ Keep Calm. Take deep breaths to relax yourself. Frantic activity will cause the venom to spread faster. Reduce movement of a bitten limb.
- ◆ Do not try to capture or kill the snake, it will probably just bite you again.
- ◆ If possible, keep the area of the bite lower than your heart.
- ◆ Remove jewelry, such as rings and watches, and tight-fitting clothes before the onset of swelling.
- ◆ Do not try to remove the venom yourself.
- ◆ Do not apply heat or cold to the bitten area.
- ◆ Do not apply home remedies to the bite.
- ◆ Do not use a tourniquet or constricting band around the bite.
- ◆ Do not use aspirin or related medications because they increase bleeding.
- ◆ Do not eat or drink, especially alcoholic beverages.
- ◆ Get medical attention as soon as possible. call 9-1-1.

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Central Florida's Venomous Snakes

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Florida Cottonmouth

Scientific Name: *Agkistrodon piscivorous conanti*.

Description: Average adult size is 20-49 inches (51-121 cm), record is 74.5 inches (189 cm). A dark-colored, heavy-bodied snake. Juveniles are brightly colored with reddish-brown crossbands on a brown groundcover. The dark crossbands contain many dark spots and speckles. The pattern darkens with age so adults retain only a hint of the former banding or are a uniform black. The eye is camouflaged by a broad, dark, facial stripe. The head is thick and distinctly broader than the neck, and when viewed from above, the eyes cannot be seen. The pupil is vertical (catlike). There is a deep facial pit between the nostril and the eye.



Cottonmouths can easily be distinguished from water snakes. If the head is viewed from above, the eyes of the Cottonmouth cannot be seen while the eyes of water snakes are visible. Cottonmouths have elliptical pupils and water snakes have round pupils.

Juvenile Cottonmouths hold the tail erect and wiggle its yellow tip like a caterpillar to attract prey within striking range.

Eastern Coral Snake

Scientific Name: *Micrurus fulvius fulvius*.

Description: Average adult size is 20-30 inches (51-74 cm), record is 47.5 inches (121 cm). Body ringed with black, yellow, and red; narrow yellow rings separating the wider red and black rings. The rings continue across the belly of the snake. From tip of snout to just behind the eye the head is black. The tail is black and yellow, without any red rings. The red rings usually contain black flecks or spots. This snake can be found in habitats from dry, well-drained Flatwoods and scrub areas to low, wet hammocks and the borders of swamps. They are usually found under debris and in the ground. Because they are also ringed with red, black, and yellow or white, two harmless snakes in Florida, the Scarlet Kingsnake and the Scarlet Snake, are often confused with the Coral Snake. Both of these look-a-likes can be distinguished from the Coral Snake by their red snouts and red on their tails. Also the red bands of the Scarlet King snake and the Scarlet Snake never touch the yellow bands (the red and yellow are separated by the black).

Remember this: *“If red touches yellow, it can kill a fellow,” and “If its nose is black, it’s bad for jack.”*



Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

Scientific Name: *Crotalus adamanteus*.

Description: Average adult size is 36-72 inches (91-183 cm), record is 96 inches (244 cm). A large, heavy-bodied snake with a row of large, dark diamonds with brown centers and cream borders down its back. The ground color of the body is brownish. The tail ends in a rattle. The tail is usually a different shade, brownish or gray, and toward the end of the tail the diamonds fade out or break into bands. The large, thick head has a light bordered dark stripe running diagonally through the eye and there are vertical light stripes on the snout. The pupil is vertical (catlike) and there is a deep facial pit between the nostril and eye.

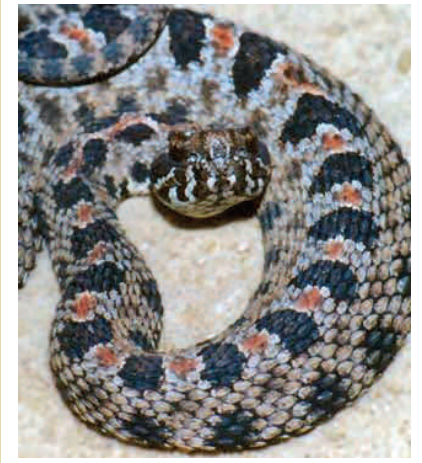
Diamondbacks are often found in pine Flatwoods, longleaf pine and turkey oak, and sand pine scrub areas. Humans have invaded many of Florida’s pine Flatwoods and scrub areas which now contain homes and shopping plazas. As a result, the displaced Diamondbacks may turn up in backyards, golf courses, and even parking lots.



Dusky Pygmy Rattlesnake

Scientific Name: *Sistrurus miliarius barbouri*.

Description: Average adult size is 12-24 inches (30-61 cm), record is 31 inches (79 cm). This is a small snake, but very thick for its size. The top of the triangular shaped head is covered with 9 large scales. The body color is light to dark gray. A longitudinal row of black or charcoal transverse blotches disrupts a reddish brown stripe running down the middle of the back. Dark spots on the side line up with the blotches. The belly is heavily mottled with black and white. Juvenile coloration is like that of the adults, but the tip of the tail is yellowish-green.



This snake is common in lowland pine Flatwoods, prairies, around lakes and ponds, and along the borders of many freshwater marshes and cypress swamps.

Florida’s two hognose snakes occasionally are confused with the Pygmy Rattlesnake. However, it is easy to distinguish between the harmless hognose snakes and the Pygmy Rattlesnake. The harmless hognose snakes defend themselves against predators by spreading (flattening) their heads and neck. If this does not scare the threat away, the hognose snakes will turn onto their backs and play dead.