

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
A Division of the Fresno County Department of Public Health

Manual:	Emergency Medical Services Administrative Policies and Procedures	Policy Number: 510.31
Subject:	Basic Life Support (BLS) Protocols	Page: 1 of 2
	SNAKEBITE	
References:	California Administrative Code, Title 22, Division 9, Chapter 2	Effective: 11/15/83

I. TREATMENT

If the patient is in shock, refer to Shock Protocol:

- A. Oxygen – Low flow 6 liters/min. by nasal cannula. High flow 15 liters/min. by non-rebreathing mask if patient is in shock.
- B. Immediately remove constricting jewelry and clothing to the snakebite area.
- C. Apply elastic bandage 2-5 inches proximal to the bite. Do not apply to hand or foot. No other tourniquet should be used. This should be applied to a tightness, which allows you to slip one finger underneath.
- D. Immobilize affected extremity at or slightly below the level of the heart.
- E. Keep patient at rest.
- F. Mark area of swelling with pen line and record time.

II. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A. Assessment – Vital signs, site of wound, measure the circumference of the extremity, mark and record, note extent of swelling and record time.
- B. Keep patient quiet and reassure.
- C. Transport
 - 1. Code 3 transport is indicated for patients in shock, uncontrolled bleeding or with concurrent severe injuries.
 - 2. Code 2 transport for patients with stable vital signs without immediate life threat.

Approved By: EMS Division Manager	Daniel J. Lynch (Signature on File at EMS Agency)	Revision:
EMS Medical Director	Jim Andrews, M.D. (Signature on File at EMS Agency)	02/01/2011

Subject:	Basic Life Support (BLS) Protocols – Snakebite	Policy Number: 510.31
----------	--	--------------------------

- D. If snake was an exotic pet or zoo animal (e.g., coral snake, cobra, krait, or Mojave rattlesnake), neurologic or respiratory depression may precede local reaction. Observe for mental status change, respiratory depression, convulsions, or paralysis.
- E. Do not allow any person to apply ice or cooling. Do not allow incision of the wound.
- F. The most effective field management of envenomation is rapid transport (not necessarily code 3) to the emergency department so that intravenous anti-venin can be administered.
- G. Reassure patient. Mortality from snakebites is rare, particularly in young, healthy patients. Many bites are “dry bites” with no venom injected.
- H. EMS personnel should try to ascertain the type of snake if possible and if time allows; however, do not transport or bring the snake to the hospital.