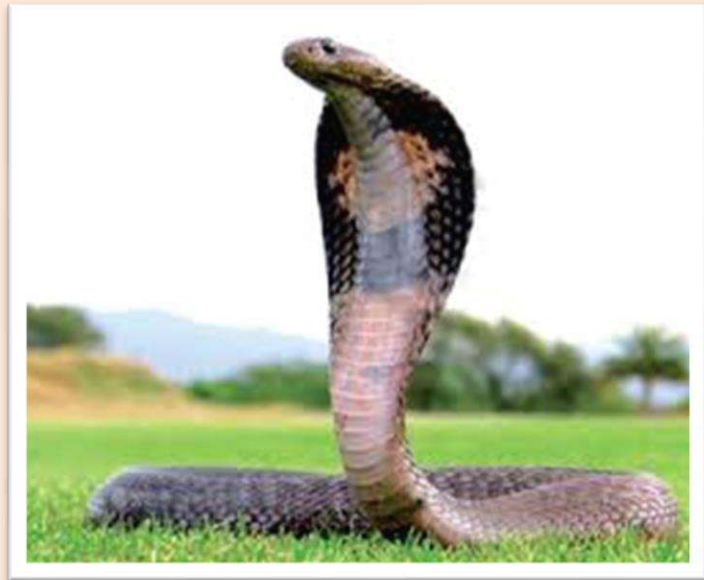


IDENTIFICATION OF SNAKES AND PREVENTION OF SNAKE BITES IN SRI LANKA



National Poisons Information Centre
National Hospital of Sri Lanka
Colombo

THE MEDICALLY IMPORTANT SNAKES IN SRI LANKA

Most land snakes are non-venomous but some snakes are highly venomous resulting considerable morbidity and mortality.

Classification

Highly venomous - causing life-threatening envenoming and reported fatalities

Potentially highly venomous - potentially life-threatening envenoming with no reported fatalities

Venomous - envenoming is not life-threatening, responds to treatment, no reported fatalities

HIGHLY VENOMOUS SNAKES

COBRA - *Naja naja*



- The only snake in Sri Lanka with a hood.
- Has a spectacle mark on the back of the hood and 2 black spots in front (ventral).
- Head is oval with ill-defined neck

RUSSELL'S VIPER *Daboia russelli russelli*



- Triangular head with a “V” mark and narrow neck.
- Three rows of dark brown oval shaped patches edged with black and white along the body.

COMMON KRAIT *Bungarus caeruleus*



- Black glossy snake with a white belly.
- Narrow white paired rings fade with age.

SRI LANKAN KRAIT *Bungarus ceylonicus*



- Bluish black in colour with single white rings extending to belly.

MERREM'S HUMP NOSED PIT VIPER *Hypnale hypnale*



LOW LAND HUMPS NOSED PIT VIPER

Hypnale zara



- Pit vipers are so called as they all have a heat sensitive loreal pit between the eye and the nostril on each side the head.
- Has an upturned snout.
- In *Hypnale hypnale* snout is not elevated but small wart like growth is seen at the tip of the snout.
- In *Hypnale zara* snout is elevated and small wart like growth is seen at the tip of the snout.

POTENTIALLY HIGHLY VENOMOUS SNAKES

SRI LANKAN HUMPS NOSED PIT VIPER

Hypnale nepa



- Loreal pit between the eye and nostril on each side the head.
- Has an upturned snout
- Snout is elevated but small wart like growth is not seen at the tip of the snout.

GREEN PIT VIPER

Craspedocephalus trigonocephalus



- The head scales are small equal in size.
- The body is green in colour
- The black markings on the body are variable but the black stripe through the eye is constant.

VENOMOUS SNAKES

SAW-SCALED VIPER - *Echis carinatus*



- Triangular head with narrow neck.
- White dagger or bird's foot shaped mark on the dorsum of the head.

SRI LANKAN KEELBACK / BLOSSOM KRAIT

Rhabdophis ceylonensis



- Orange colour can be seen over the head.
- Black cross lines and red colour spots can be seen along the body.
- Green yellow spots are on either side of black cross lines.

NON-VENOMOUS SNAKES

Indian Rat Snakes – *Ptyas mucosa*

Python- *Python molurus*

Sand Boa – *Eryx conicus*

Trinket snake *Coelognathus helena*
(*Elephe Helena*)

Cercaspis carinatus

Lycodon aulicus

SNAKES

WITH LOW MEDICAL IMPORTANCE

- Gamma Cat snakes- *Boiga trigonata*
- Forsten's Cat snake / Naga mapila, Le mapila
Boiga forsteni
- Slender Coral snake- *Calliophis melanurus*
- Green vine snake- *Ahaetulla nasuta*
- Brown vine snake Hena kandaya-
Ahaetulla pulverulenta
- Ornate Flying snake- *Chrysopelea ornata*

SIGNS OF ENVENOMING

- **Common effects**
Abdominal pain, Nausea, Vomiting
- **Specific effects**

COBRA -

Local effects- swelling, tissue necrosis

Neurotoxicity- ptosis, external ophthalmoplegia, limb paralysis, respiratory paralysis,

Coagulopathy is rare and mild.

RUSSELLS VIPER-

Coagulopathy - spontaneous bleeding such as

haematuria, gastro intestinal bleeding, mucosal bleeding, incoagulable blood - prolonged clotting time

Neurotoxicity - ptosis, external ophthalmoplegia

KRAIT-

Neurotoxicity- ptosis, external ophthalmoplegia, limb paralysis, respiratory paralysis, Coma.

Local effects undetectable or minimal.

No coagulopathy

HUMP NOSED VIPER-

Commonly cause only local swelling

Occasionally haemorrhagic blisters at the bite site and tender regional lymphadenopathy.

Rarely coagulopathy, acute renal failure and mild neurotoxicity and Microangiopathic hemolytic anemia (MAHA)



IN SNAKE BITES

- ❖ Reassure the patient.
- ❖ Immobilize the bitten part.
- ❖ The bitten area should be washed gently with soap and running water.
- ❖ Remove rings, bangles, anklets, cords or tight clothes.
- ❖ Give paracetamol for pain relief.
- ❖ Take the victim to hospital as early as possible.
- ❖ Take the offending snake alive, dead or a photograph if possible along with the patient

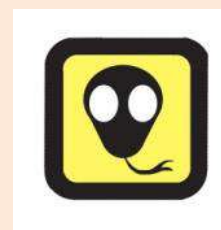
PREVENTION

- ✓ Wear shoes or boots, and long trousers when walking to the jungle.
- ✓ When walking outside at night, use a torch or light.
- ✓ Do not put your hand into ant hills, cavities in trees and under logs.
- ✓ Should be cautious when you remove fallen trees, logs and firewood.
- ✓ Dispose garbage and junk regularly, and try to keep your home and surrounding area free of rats, mice, frogs, lizards, etc.
- ✓ Do not touch or disturb a snake even if it appears dead.

FEW DONT'S

- Do not try to suck the venom out of the wound.
- Do not apply incision over the bite side.
- Do not apply tourniquet above the bitten area.
- Do not apply chemicals on the bitten area. E.g. Condys crystals.
- Do not administer medicines or liquids such as oil or “Nasna” by nasal instillation
- Do not drink “Thambili”, “Kurumba” or fruit juices.
- Do not take aspirin and aspirin containing drugs.

Reach us on;



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