

POISONology

SAFETY & FIRST AID TIPS FROM THE ARIZONA POISON AND DRUG INFORMATION CENTER

'Invisible' snakes bite, too



Beware and use caution when you go outside in the desert Southwest. You can be bitten by a poisonous snake without having seen or heard the snake before it strikes. Rattlesnakes don't always shake their rattles before, during or after they bite us.

On the poison center website, you can watch a video and listen to a diamondback's rattle. Some people are surprised what the rattle really sounds like.

We can be really at risk for being bitten by a non-rattling snake in late summer. Baby rattlesnakes are born in late July and August and are active. The baby snakes have no rattle until they first shed their skins, so they make no warning sound. They can range in length from six to 12 inches, but have enough venom to be very dangerous. Brush and grass may camouflage the small snakes and make them "invisible" to people.

At the poison center in Tucson, we get calls from Arizonans of all ages who have suffered rattlesnake bites without realizing they had been bitten by a snake until reviewing their symptoms with our experts. The parents of one of our youngest victims first thought their daughter had been stung by a scorpion.

Because obtaining immediate medical treatment is critical in cases of venomous snakebite, the poison center encourages anyone who feels an unidentified "sting," "pinch" or "bite" while outdoors, especially on an arm or a leg, or who notices a small cut or wound, **to immediately call the center at 1-800-222-1222.**

We will ask you a few questions that will help you either identify possible snakebite or eliminate it. In cases like the ones mentioned above, we can make a very big difference for the victims and the medical teams treating them.

If you have other poisoning concerns or questions call the toll free national hotline at 1-800-222-1222 to reach your local poison center. If you live in Arizona outside of Maricopa County, this number will get you to our experts at the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center in Tucson.