

Snake Awareness and First Aid Policy

Quality Area: 2: Children's Health and Safety

Standard: 2.1 Each Child's health is promoted

Element: 2.1.1: Each Child's health needs are supported

Purpose

This policy aims to clearly define:

- procedures for preventing snake bite
- the risk of snakes in the Bush Kinder setting
- the appropriate medical response to snake bites
- a framework for appropriately educating and training children, staff and parents on minimising the risk of snake bites

Policy Statement

1. Values

Heathmont East Preschool is committed to:

- providing a safe and healthy environment for children and staff participating in the Bush Kinder program
- respecting the wildlife in and around the Bush Kinder space, including being aware of the presence of snakes in the warmer months
- communicating and educating staff and parents to minimise the risk of injury from a snake bite to children and staff during Bush Kinder.

2. Scope

This policy applies to parents, staff, committee members, authorised persons, volunteers and students on placement working at Heathmont East Preschool.

3. Background and Legislation

Background

Heathmont East Preschool's Bush Kinder program is conducted in an area of bush behind the Scout Hall known as Lobelia Swamp in HE Parker Reserve.

Snakes are most prevalent in the warmer months (October to April) but could be encountered at other times. Unprovoked, snakes rarely attack humans and are generally shy, timid animals that will avoid conflict if given the opportunity.

It is recommended that care be taken in warm weather, near long grass or hollow logs, near water or near rocks in sunny positions. Snakes are protected under the Wildlife Act 1975, and should not be harmed or killed. Bites can occur if people try to kill snakes.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation may include but is not limited to:

- *Education and Care Services National Law 2010*
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007
- *Wildlife Act 1975.*

4. Definitions

Australian Venom Research Unit (AVRU): An internationally recognised interdisciplinary research unit focused on venomous injury in Australia and the Asia Pacific. Located with Melbourne University, the AVRU aims to provide world class expertise about Australia's venomous creatures, their toxins and the care of the envenomed patient.

Pressure immobilisation bandage (also known as a compression bandage): Bandage used to apply pressure to a wound site (such as a snake bite) and to the affected limb.

Pressure immobilisation bandaging: This type of bandaging prevents the spread of toxins through the body, by applying enough pressure to compress the lymph vessels, and by preventing the affected limb moving. Applying the technique correctly can buy valuable time to get the patient to medical assistance. (See Attachment 1 for the correct application of the pressure immobilisation technique.)

Victorian Poisons Information Centre (VPIC): Located at the Austin Hospital, the VPIC provides the people of Victoria with a timely, safe information service in poisonings and suspected poisonings. This service includes telephone assessment, advice on first aid, with or without referral to a doctor or hospital. VPIC also guides health professionals about formulating products and managing poisoned patients

Heathmont East Preschool policy and procedures

Heathmont East Pre-School is responsible for:

1. Supplying a First Aid Kit on site at Bush Kinder to administer first aid in response to snake bites or for any other purpose which includes pressure immobilisation bandages (also known as compression bandages) for medical treatment of snake bites.

2. Ensuring staff are appropriately educated on procedures to prevent snakebite and to deliver First Aid in response to a Snake Bite (see below).
3. Following all procedures as set out in the Incident and Medical Emergency Management Policy (including notice of notifiable incidents, appropriate record keeping in the event of an incident, maintain first aid kit etc)
4. Encouraging parents, through this policy, to teach children snake bite prevention behaviours outside of Bush Kinder (for example, on family walks in the Nature)

Nominated supervisor, Teachers, educators and other staff are responsible for:

1. Continually practicing and educating children on snake bite prevention behaviours while at Bush Kinder, without fostering an unnatural fear or paranoia of snakes. This includes practising and highlighting to children the following key points:

Snake Bite Prevention Behaviours (Source: Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Austin Health)

- Leave snakes alone
- Wear adequate clothing and stout shoes (not sandals/thongs) in 'snake country'
- Never put hands in hollow logs or thick grass without prior inspection
- When stepping over logs, carefully inspect the ground on the other side
- Ensure children are reminded on a regular basis that if they encounter a snake, to move away quietly and report the sighting immediately to a teacher.
- If a snake is encountered at Bush Kinder, calmly moving children away from the snake. [Staff must not attempt to touch or harm the snake].
- Administering first aid in the event of a snake bite

First aid for snakebite (Source: Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Austin Health, and Australian Venom Research Institute, Melbourne University))

- Stay calm and call for help. Have someone phone an ambulance. If unable to phone, send someone for help.
- Reassure the patient and encourage them to remain calm and still. Do not move the patient.
- Do not attempt to catch or kill the snake
- DO NOT WASH the bite. Traces of venom that are left on the skin can be used to identify the snake, and therefore the type of anti-venom that should be used if required.
- Venom is injected deeply so there is no benefit in cutting or sucking the bite. A tourniquet is not an effective way to restrict venom movement.
- The most effective first aid for snakebite is the [pressure-immobilisation technique](#). (Refer to Attachment 1 for instructions on the application of this technique). The principle is to minimise the movement of the venom around the body until the victim

is in a hospital by applying a firm bandage (or suitable alternative) to the bitten area and limb, and to immobilise the victim. When applied properly, this method can trap

- the venom in the bitten area for many hours. The victim might not suffer any effects of the venom until the compression is released, which is done in hospital where anti-venom can be administered if required.
- Staff are to follow procedures as set out in Incident & Medical Emergency Management Policy, including contacting parent/guardian, calling ambulance etc

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- 1 Teaching children on an ongoing basis safe snakebite prevention behaviours outside Bush Kinder, for example, on family walks in the Nature
- 2 Reading and being familiar with the policy
- 3 Bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and committee

Evaluation

To assess whether the policy has achieved the values and Heathmont East Preschool will:

- Seek feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents of children participating in the Bush Kinder program. This can be facilitated through discussions and the annual centre survey.
- Ask staff to share their experiences and observations in relation to the effectiveness of this policy.
- Regularly review the policy and centre practices to ensure they are compliant with any new legislation, research or best practice procedures.

Sources and other related policies

Sources

- Bites and stings web resource, VPIC (www.austin.org.au)
- Australian Venom Research Unit (www.avru.org)
- Naturewalking Victoria snakebite web resource (www.Naturewalkingvictoria.org.au)

Kindergarten policies

- Excursion & Service Events Policy
- Bush Kinder Extreme Weather Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Identification and Visibility Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Identification and Visibility Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)

- Bush Kinder Snake Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Dog Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Mini Beast Sting or Bite First Aid Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)

- Bush Kinder Play Benefits and Risk Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Medical Emergency Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Occupational Health & Safety Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Water Safety Policy
- Incident, Illness, Trauma & Illness Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy

Attachments

Attachment 1: Pressure Immobilisation Technique (Detailed instructions with diagram on application of this technique in the event of a snake bite). Source: Australian Venom Research Institute (Melbourne University)

Authorisation

This policy was approved and passed by the Heathmont East Preschool Committee of Management and adopted by Heathmont East Preschool on:

5/6/2024

Authorised by: Alison Uldrich[President]

Authorised by: Sarah Black [Nominated Supervisor]

Review Date: June 2027

ATTACHMENT 1

Pressure Immobilisation Bandaging Fact Sheet

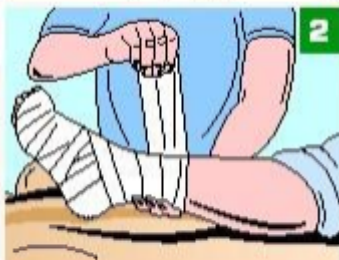
Source: Australian Venom Research Unit, University of Melbourne
(www.avru.org)

The principle of pressure-immobilisation bandaging as a first aid measure is to prevent the spread of toxins through the body. This is done by applying enough pressure to compress the lymph vessels, and by preventing movement of the affected limb. Correct application of the technique can buy valuable time to get the patient to medical assistance.

First Aid for Bites to the Lower Limb



1 As soon as possible, apply a broad pressure bandage from below the bite site, upward on the affected limb (starting at the fingers or toes, bandaging upward as far as possible). Leave the tips of the fingers or toes unbandaged to allow the victim's circulation to be checked. Do not remove pants or trousers, simply bandage over the top of the clothing.



2 Bandage firmly as for a sprained ankle, but not so tight that circulation is prevented. Continue to bandage upward from the lower portion of the bitten limb



3 Apply the bandage as far up the limb as possible to compress the lymphatic vessels.

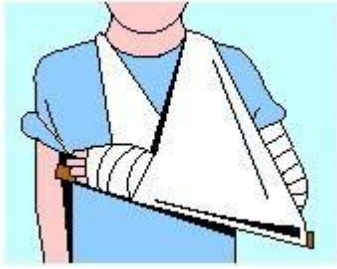


4 It is vital to now apply a splint. Bind a stick or suitable rigid item over the initial bandage to splint the limb. Secure the splint to the bandaged limb by using another bandage, (if another bandage is not available, use clothing strips or similar to bind).



5 It is very important to keep the bitten limb still. Bind the splint firmly, to as much of the limb as possible, to prevent muscle, limb and joint movement. This will help restrict venom movement. Seek urgent medical assistance now that first aid has been applied.

First Aid for Bites on the Hand or Forearm



1 As soon as possible, apply a broad pressure bandage from the fingers of the affected arm, bandaging upward as far as possible. Bandage the arm with the elbow in a bent position, to

- 2 Ensure the victim is comfortable with their arm in a sling. Leave the tips of the fingers unbandaged to allow the victim's circulation to be checked.
- 3 Bind a splint along the forearm.
- 4 Use a sling to further prevent limb movement.