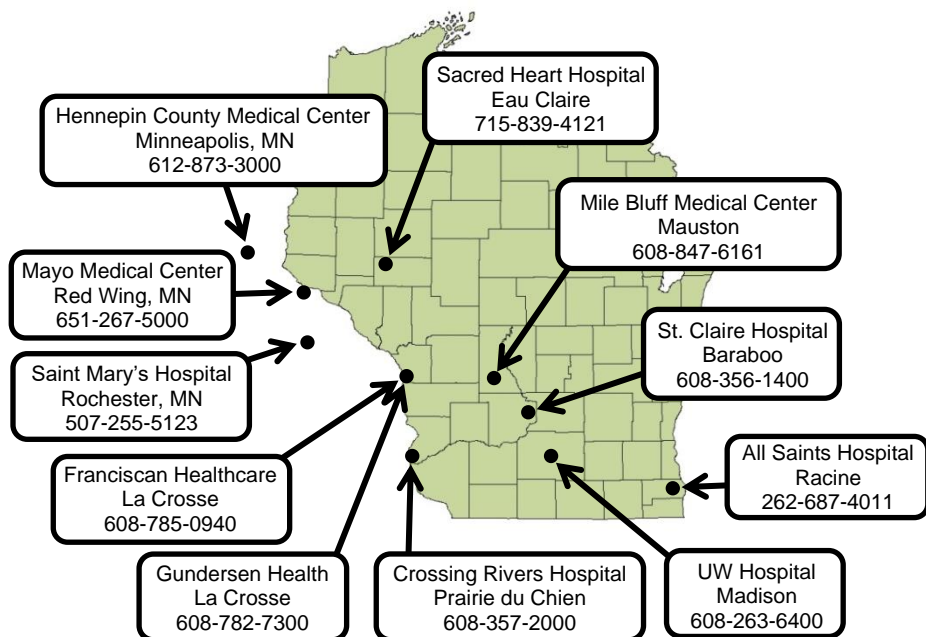


Step 4: Get to a hospital as soon as possible, preferably within one hour of the bite. Call ahead, if possible, to alert them you are coming. The contact information for hospitals in Wisconsin (and surrounding areas) known to carry anti-venom is shown below (2023 data). If you are unsure of which facilities are nearest you, contact the National Poison Center at **800-222-1222** to ask for locations where CroFab® anti-venom is available.



Step 5: After receiving treatment, call the Wisconsin Poison Center at **800-815-8855** to inform them of the bite.

*Rattlesnake bite protocol provided by:
Dr. Daniel Keyler (Hennepin County Medical Center, Minneapolis, MN)*

Bite Treatment for Pets

If a dog or other pet is bitten by a rattlesnake, move the animal away from the snake and call your veterinarian immediately. If they do not have experience with rattlesnake bites, contact the Animal Poison Control Center at 800-213-6680. Keep the animal as calm as possible and remove constricting items (e.g., collar, harness, horse bridle). Do not cut the bite and do not apply heat or ice.

Avoiding and Treating Rattlesnake Bites in Wisconsin

Wisconsin's two rattlesnake species, the eastern massasauga and the timber rattlesnake, are shy and secretive animals that often rely on their coloration to avoid being detected. In addition, both species are extremely rare and many biologists consider themselves lucky to ever see one in the wild. Wisconsin rattlesnakes are generally non-aggressive, typically preferring not to strike unless they are harassed or cornered. Often they remain motionless or move away quietly without being seen.

Rattlesnake bites in Wisconsin are extremely rare. Timber rattlesnake bites have averaged one every four years in recent history and only one rattlesnake fatality has been documented in Wisconsin since 1900. Although a bite is highly unlikely, this pamphlet outlines measures you can take to be better prepared in case you should encounter a rattlesnake.



The fear of snakes is a learned behavior which has been intensified by myths and media misrepresentation. This fear has resulted in the continual persecution of these animals since European colonization. Up until 1975 there was a bounty offered for rattlesnakes, causing a rapid decline in their populations. As knowledge increases, more people are beginning to help conserve these species. Snakes are also beneficial to people - they keep rodent populations in check. You are encouraged to report information about rattlesnakes including sightings, den locations, mortalities, and illegal collecting or killing. Your cooperation will help us better track and protect these species.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation
dnr.wi.gov/topic/EndangeredResources



PUB-ER-083 2023

Rattlesnake Identification

Many non-venomous snakes are often misidentified as rattlesnakes, especially species such as the foxsnake (pine snake) and gophersnake (bullsnake) that mimic rattlesnakes by “rattling” their tails – appearing and sounding almost exactly like a true rattlesnake. In addition, both of Wisconsin’s rattlesnakes have pronounced rattles at the end of their tails whereas non-venomous species in Wisconsin have tails that come to a point, similar to a sharp pencil.

Two species of rattlesnakes inhabit Wisconsin: the timber rattlesnake and the eastern massasauga.



Eastern Massasauga



Eastern Massasauga
Historic Range

The eastern massasauga is state endangered and proposed as federally threatened. This species is extremely rare and remains at only 9 sites within its historic range. It is illegal to collect, possess or kill this species.



Timber Rattlesnake



Timber Rattlesnake Range

The timber rattlesnake is a protected wild animal, meaning it is illegal to collect, possess or kill this species except in cases where there is an immediate threat to humans or domestic animals.

Steps to Avoid Bites

Do:

- Know which areas are habitat for rattlesnakes (see *Snakes of Wisconsin* PUB-ER-100)
- Stay on marked trails and paths

Don't:

- Handle, harass, or try to kill the snake; **this is how most bites occur**
- Reach into crevices you can't see into

Bite Treatment

Do:

- Move away from the snake to avoid further bites
- Remain calm
- Remove constrictors from bite area (rings, watches, etc.)
- Wash the bite with soap/water
- Immobilize the bitten area and keep it lower than the heart
- Seek immediate medical attention

Don't:

- Cut the snake bite with any type of device
- Apply ice
- Attempt to suck the venom out with your mouth
- Use electric shock treatment
- Administer alcohol or drugs to the victim
- Use ibuprofen, aspirin, or other blood thinners

Step 1: Reassure the victim and do not allow unnecessary movement. Have the victim lie flat and place the bitten limb in a comfortable position at a level slightly lower than the victim's heart.

Step 2: If you are located more than an hour from the nearest hospital with anti-venom (see *Step 4*) and have a Sawyer Pump Extractor or other venom extractor, use a cup size to adequately cover the fang punctures. More than one pump may be used if available. Apply extractor for no longer than 5 minutes. The extractor should **NOT** cause a delay in getting to a medical center; it is extremely important to receive treatment as soon as possible.

Step 3: If you are more than an hour from the nearest hospital with anti-venom, you may apply a constriction band. Wrap a wide constriction band (elastic bandage-type) around the bitten limb just above the bite site with the tightness being similar to that used to wrap a sprained ankle. Do not wrap tightly. Leave the band in place until the victim has arrived at a hospital and anti-venom therapy has been initiated if deemed necessary.