San Mateo County Emergency Medical Services

Stings/Venomous Bites

History
• Type of bite or sting
• Description or photo of creature for identification, if safe to do so
• Time, location, size of bite or sting
• Previous reaction to bite or sting
• Domestic vs. wild
• Tetanus and Rabies risk
• Immunocompromised patient

Signs and Symptoms
• Rash, skin break, or wound
• Pain, soft tissue swelling, or redness
• Blood oozing from the bite wound
• Evidence of infection
• Shortness of breath or wheezing
• Allergic reaction, hives, or itching
• Hypotension or shock

Differential
• Animal bite
• Human bite
• Snake bite (poisonous)
• Spider bite (poisonous)
• Insect sting/bite (bee, wasp, ant, or tick)
• Infection risk
• Rabies risk
• Tetanus risk

General wound care

Consider, IV/IO

Anaphylaxis?
Yes

Anaphylaxis

No

Serious injury or Hypotension?
Yes

Shock

No

Identification of animal, if possible

Spider bite
Bee/wasp sting

Snake bite

Animal bite
Human bite

Marine envenomations

Cardiac monitor

For pain consider, Fentanyl

DO NOT apply COLD PACKS

Mark margin of swelling/redness and time

Cardiac monitor

Consider, IV

For pain consider, Fentanyl

Immerse in hot water
110 – 114°F (43 – 46°C)
if available or apply hot pack

Remove barb or spine
If large barb is in thorax or abdomen, stabilize object

Cardiac monitor

Consider, IV

For pain consider, Fentanyl

Notify receiving facility.
Contact Base Hospital for medical direction

California Poison Control Center
(800) 222-1222

Effective November 2018

Treatment Protocol E04

Effective April 2024
Poisonous snakes in our region are generally of the pit viper family: six rattlesnake species.

If no pain or swelling is present, envenomation is unlikely. About 25% of snake bites are dry bites.

Black Widow spider bites tend to be minimally painful initially, but over a few hours, muscular and severe abdominal pain may develop (black spider with a red hourglass on the belly).

Brown Recluse spider bites are minimally painful to painless. Little reaction is noted initially but tissue necrosis at the site of the bite develops over the next few days (brown spider with fiddle shape on back).

Evidence of infection includes: swelling, redness, drainage, fever, and red streaks proximal to wound.

Consider contacting the California Poison Control Center for identification (800) 222-1222.