



SNAKEBITE PROFILE

BERG ADDER

Bitis atropos



Risk of Bites

Bites are not common with around 5 serious bites a year reported in South Africa.



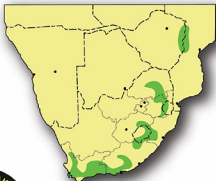
Most Bites

Most bites occur to hikers who tread on a snake or place their hands on a ledge close to a snake. Berg Adders are ill-tempered and are quick to bite when threatened.



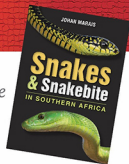
Symptoms & Venom

The venom results in both neurotoxic and to a lesser degree cytotoxic symptoms. The optic and facial nerves are affected with symptoms including drooping eyelids (ptosis), dilated pupils, blurred vision, squinting, as well as dizziness and temporary loss of taste and smell. Respiratory failure may occur several hours after the bite, and several victims end up on a ventilator. Pain and swelling can be expected. Necrosis, though not common, has been recorded in some bites.



See pages 32-34

– *Snakes and Snakebite in Southern Africa* (2024).



First Aid

Immobilise and reassure the patient. Elevate the affected limb. Remove tight clothing and jewelry. Promptly transport the victim to the nearest hospital that has emergency facilities. Avoid all other first aid remedies including bandages.



Medical Treatment

There is no effective antivenom and victims are treated symptomatically. In a recent study of 14 bites, all victims had to be intubated and ventilated 5-7 hours after envenomation. Despite a bite from a Berg Adder being considered life-threatening, no fatalities have been documented.

