

SNAKEBITE PROFILE

CAPE COBRA

Naja nivea



Risk of Bites

The Cape Cobra is commonly encountered in suburbia, especially in areas where rodents are abundant. If cornered, it is quick to rear up and form a hood and if approached closely will bite readily.



Most Bites

Most victims are bitten on the lower leg or on a hand, often when attempting to capture or kill the snake.

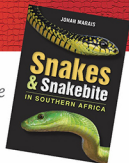


Symptoms & Venom

A potent and fast-acting neurotoxic venom that is quite similar to Black Mamba venom in its effects. It results in pins and needles in the lips, nausea, excessive sweating, drooping eyelids, difficulty in swallowing and eventually drowsiness and muscle pain followed by paralysis and respiratory failure. Some victims also experience some swelling. In severe cases victims become unresponsive within less than one hour.

See pages 49-51

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



First Aid

Immobilise and reassure the patient, who must lie down in a rescue position. Immediately arrange transport to a hospital with emergency facilities. If far from a hospital, apply a pressure bandage (Page 19 of *Snakes and Snakebite in Southern Africa*). Resort to artificial respiration if the victim stops breathing.



Medical Treatment

In cases of severe envenomation patients are intubated and ventilated if they are not breathing. They are treated with 12-15 vials of SAVP Polyvalent antivenom. Additional vials of antivenom may be required at a later stage. Even after receiving antivenom, patients may remain unresponsive for a day or two.

