



# SNAKEBITE FIELD GUIDE – COSTA RICA

## 1. DANGEROUS SNAKES TO KNOW

- Pit Vipers (Viperidae)
- Bothrops asper (“terciopelo”): most bites in CR.
- Crotalus simus (neotropical rattlesnake).
- Bothriechis lateralis (eyelash viper).



**ID clues:** large triangular head, slit pupil, heat-sensing pit between eye and nostril, rough dull scales, tail often distinct.



- Coral Snakes (Elapidae)
- Micrurus species.

**ID clues:** red-yellow-black banding (“red touching yellow can kill a fellow”). Small, fixed fangs. Usually shy but highly venomous.

## 2. NON-VENOMOUS COMMON SNAKES

- Boas, rat snakes, vine snakes, blind snakes.



**ID clues:** round pupils, head blends into body, shiny smooth scales, no pits, no fangs.

## 3. FIRST AID (WHAT TO DO IMMEDIATELY)

- ✓ Stay calm and keep the victim calm.
- ✓ Call for transport to hospital immediately.
- ✓ Immobilize the bitten limb with a splint, keep it below heart level.
- ✓ Remove rings, watches, or tight clothing near the bite (swelling will occur).
- ✓ Keep the person lying down, well-hydrated, and as still as possible.
- ✓ Get to hospital (25 min for you = excellent). Antivenom is the ONLY effective treatment.

## 4. WHAT NOT TO DO

- ✗ No tourniquets (cause tissue death).
- ✗ No cutting or sucking the wound.
- ✗ No ice or cold packs.
- ✗ No alcohol or traditional plant/animal remedies.
- ✗ Do not waste time chasing or killing the snake (risk of second bite).

## 5. HOSPITAL TREATMENT

Immediately go to Clínica CCSS Orotina! If possible take a picture of snake or remember how it looks like.

- Viper bite → polyvalent antivenom.
- Coral bite → specific anticoral antivenom.
- Supportive care: IV fluids, pain relief, monitoring for shock, infection control.

## 6. PREVENTION TIPS FOR COMMUNITY

- Wear boots and long pants in fields.
- Use headlamp/flashlight at night.
- Don’t put hands/feet in holes, under logs, or into tall grass without looking.
- Keep grass short around homes.
- Store firewood away from living areas.
- Teach children to look, don’t touch.
- Workers should know where the nearest hospital/clinic with suero antiofídico is.