

Cost of snakebite therapy may squeeze victims' wallets

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Hospital care, treatment can top \$50,000 for venomous snake encounter.

(HealthDay) -- It goes without saying that bites from venomous snakes can be painful and dangerous, but they can also be very expensive, an expert warns.

Medical bills of \$50,000 or more are not uncommon for a person bitten by a venomous snake, said Jill Heatley, an associate professor of [veterinary medicine](#) at Texas A&M University in College Station.

The total cost includes hospitalization, which can last from one day to several weeks, treatment of damaged tissue, and antivenin therapy, which can run into the thousands of dollars.

Unusually warm temperatures and plenty of rainfall this spring means that some areas of the United States could see higher populations of

snakes. People should be aware of this when they and their pets are outdoors, Heatley said.

"The thing to remember about snakes is that, generally, they want to be left alone. They are probably more afraid of you," she said in a university news release.

Because they're inquisitive, pets may be at increased risk for snakebites. Dogs usually suffer bites to the face or nose, while cats tend to get bitten on their paws, Heatley noted.

"The area that has been bitten will usually begin to swell almost immediately, and that's a telltale sign to look for," Heatley explained.

A bitten pet requires immediate treatment because snake venom can spread quickly inside the animal, and kidney failure can result in 12 to 24 hours.

"One of the questions we often get is, how can you tell a venomous snake from a harmless one?" Heatley said. "The answer is that it's difficult because there are numerous types of [snakes](#) that are not venomous that look very similar to a venomous one."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [venomous snakes](#).

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