Information Needed

1. History: Accurate description of snake or insect. (Bring bite source in for positive identification in a closed solid container only when safe to do so. Avoid snake fangs because they are capable of envenomation even when snake is dead. If the snake is alive, do not attempt to capture.) Note time of bite or sting, time pain started and rate of pain, spreading numbness or tingling from the site, complaint of metallic taste in mouth. Note signs/symptoms of anaphylaxis such as lightheadedness, shortness of breath, apprehension.
2. Physical Findings: Local tenderness and swelling at site. Note fang marks or stinger left at site. Note uncontrolled bleeding at site and/or spreading erythema and edema.

Treatment

1. Keep patient calm, quiet and still.
2. O_2, cardiac monitor and IV.
3. Control any bleeding.
4. Treat anaphylaxis per protocol
5. If extremity is site of bite or sting, immobilize and /or elevate. Remove any restrictive clothing or jewelry.
6. With a pen outline the extent of redness and swelling. Do not use ice or tourniquets. Do not excise.
7. Treat pain, nausea and muscle spasms with appropriate medications per protocol.
8. Treat hypotension with fluids first, then consider vasopressors if necessary.

Notes

1. Tourniquets and excisions are used when there is no likelihood of getting to the hospital in four hours or greater.
2. Ice is never to be used as it causes more tissue damage.
3. Exotic poisonous snakes such as those in zoos or pet stores have different signs and symptoms than those of the pit vipers native to this area. Zoos and legal exotic snake collectors are required to have a starter supply of antivenin on hand for each type of snake. Bring the antivenin with the patient to the hospital.

Venomous Bites/Stings

4. Bites from coral snakes and snakes related to cobras usually do not have any early symptoms, thus all their bites are considered envenomated.
5. Attempt to correct hypotension before giving narcotic pain medication. Consider fentanyl before morphine if the patient is borderline hypotensive.
6. If respiratory depression is caused by or accelerated by narcotics, reverse them with narcan.

La Plata County EMS Protocols Version 2010.1.0