



SNAKEBITE PROFILE

GABOON ADDER

Bitis gabonica



Risk of Bites

Bites from the Gaboon Adder are unheard of in South Africa. They are rarely encountered and have a restricted distribution, ranging from Mtunzini northwards along the coast to Mozambique and further north.



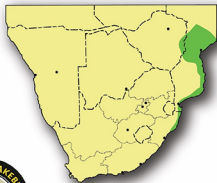
Most Bites

There are no documented bites from this snake in southern Africa, except for incidents where snake keepers were bitten by captive snakes.



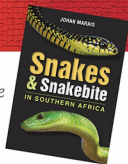
Symptoms & Venom

The venom is potentially cytotoxic as well as haemotoxic. Symptoms include severe pain, progressive swelling, bleeding from the fang punctures, blistering and tissue damage. The lymph nodes may also be affected. As the venom yield of a large Gaboon Adder is roughly double that of a Puff Adder, a bite from this snake could have serious consequences.



See pages 29-31

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



First Aid

Immobilise and reassure the patient and 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

In cases of severe envenomation where there are clear signs of progressive swelling, which extends more than 10-15cm per hour above the bite site, doctors will treat such bites with 12 ampoules (or more) of polyvalent antivenom. Anti-inflammatories (NSAID's) and antibiotics are not indicated in the short term. Fasciotomies are rarely justified and should generally be avoided. In cases where patients suffer tissue damage, surgery may be required but rarely in the first few days. There are no documented fatalities for bites from this snake in South Africa.

