

HERPETOLOGIST URGES KIDS TO STAY CALM AND ALERT ADULTS

Snake safety lessons for schoolchildren

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- Do not corner a snake or block its escape route.
- Do not touch or pick up a snake, even if it appears to be dead. Some snakes play dead.
- Do not crowd around to take photographs.
- Do not put your hands into holes, drains, piles of leaves, or dark corners.

Calcutta: A herpetologist addressed students at The Heritage School on Thursday, telling them how to respond if they spot a snake at school or elsewhere.

A Class III girl was bitten by a snake in the school washroom last week. She was admitted to a hospital but showed no signs of envenomation and resumed school on Monday.

"The session was for children and teachers to orient them about their individual responsibilities. Children should not panic but inform an adult. They should also not make up stories as a prank or to scare their peers," said herpetologist Anirban Chaudhuri.

Schools and teachers should identify government hospitals in their area that can administer anti-venom if required, he said.

"If children encounter an insect, snake, or an unknown bite, the first thing they need to do is shout, scream or alert others. This



Herpetologist Anirban Chaudhuri conducts a snake-safety awareness session for students at The Heritage School on Thursday; (below) children at the session. Pictures by Sanat Kr Sinha



is to ensure that everybody is safe," said principal Seema Sapru.

A Class I boy from Mitra Institution who was bitten by a snake at school was taken to SSKM Hospital and administered antivenom. Hospital authorities suspected the snake to be a Russell's viper.

"Schools should conduct a survey in advance to find out whether private hospi-

tals in the area have facilities to administer anti-venom," Chaudhuri said.

He repeatedly told the children not to panic but to immediately inform an adult.

"Nobody is going to scold you for having an accident. If you spot something, immediately inform an adult," he said.

Children attending physical training classes

and removing their shoes should cover the shoes with socks, he said. If they feel something moving inside a shoe, they should step back immediately and inform an adult.

The session was attended by students from Classes II to XII.

For older children who go hiking, Chaudhuri advised them to check tents and areas under pillows and to keep their shoes inside rather than outside.

They should carefully inspect their surroundings before sitting on rocks or crossing logs.

Teachers should also be familiar with basic first aid for snakebites, he said.

"They should not tie a rope or band around the bite or cut, burn or suck the wound. The bitten person should not be given tea, coffee, food or drink. Ice, chem-

WHAT TO DO

If a child spots a snake

- Step back
- Inform an adult
- Do not touch or pick it up

Preventive steps for schools

- Keep classrooms, store-rooms and corridors tidy
- Keep grass and bushes along walkways trimmed
- Keep food waste covered, as rodents can attract snakes

icals or herbs should not be applied to the bite," he said.

An adult should note the time of the bite and arrange rapid transport to a medical facility equipped to treat snakebite, he said.

"Teachers or an adult accompanying a child should note symptoms such as drooping eyelids, slurred speech, throat swelling and breathing difficulties," Chaudhuri said.

"There is no need to kill the snake and take it to the hospital. Doctors will treat the patient based on the symptoms," he said.

The session also covered other common creatures that children may encounter in school compounds, including honey bees, moth caterpillars, centipedes and scorpions.