



# INDICATIONS FOR ANTIVENOM ADMINISTRATION IN ZAMBIA



## CLINICAL SYNDROMES OF ENVENOMATION

### ANTIVENOM NOT ABSOLUTELY INDICATED

**PROGRESSIVE WEAKNESS (PW)**  
(Black Mamba and Non-Spitting Cobra bites)

**PAINFUL PROGRESSIVE SWELLING (PPS)**  
(Puff Adder, Gaboon Adder, Spitting Cobras, Night Adder, stiletto Snake)

### ANTIVENOM MAY BE LIFE-SAVING

**BLEEDING (B)**  
(Boomslang, Twig Snake)

&

**MIXED PPS & B**  
(Puff Adder, Gaboon Adder, Black-necked Spitting Cobra)

## SEVERE ENVENOMATION ANTICIPATED

The triad of pins & needles with or without metallic taste, profuse sweating and excessive salivation—Black Mamba

Swelling extending at 15 cm or more for one hour.

Extremity bites: swelling reaches the knee or elbow within 3-4 hours.

Unstoppable bleeding from fang punctures and/or severe headaches, dizziness, fainting or convulsions

## SEVERE OR LIFE-THREATENING ENVENOMATION PRESENT

Shortness of breath due to weakness in the absence of PPS (Black Mamba)

Inability to swallow saliva

Generalised weakness in the presence of PPS (Non-spitting Cobras)

*Drooping eyelids, dilated pupils or squint may not be followed by respiratory distress per se.*

Extremity bites—swelling of a whole limb within 8 hours

Swelling threatening the airway

Associated unexplained shortness of breath

Associated abnormality of blood clotting (see B syndrome)

Very tense limb (compartment syndrome) or compressed major blood vessel

Active systemic bleeding (not bruising of the bitten limb alone)

Non-clotting blood after 20 minutes in an undisturbed, new, dry, clean test tube (use blood from a healthy person as a control)

Significant laboratory evidence of a blood clotting abnormality

