

# COPPERHEAD FACT SHEET



## How to Identify

The safest way to identify a copperhead is by its pattern and head size because you can do it from a distance.

Copperheads have dark-colored crossbands along their body, wide on the sides and narrow near the backbone like an imperfect hourglass. Their heads are also much wider than their necks. Juveniles have a bright yellow or yellow-green tail.

If you are unsure whether a snake you encounter is a copperhead, it's always best to play it safe.

## What to Do If You Spot a Copperhead

If you come across a copperhead, the best thing to do is give the snake a wide berth, and steer children and pets safely away. Give others you pass on the trail a heads up so they can be safely aware, and continue to enjoy your time in the park.

## Should I Kill a Copperhead If I See One?

It is against Henrico law to harm any animal found in our parks ([see Henrico County Code, Sec. 14-37](#)), and trying to do so would put you in unnecessary danger. Copperheads are also important in controlling rodent populations, which helps minimize damage to local farms and gardens, as well as reduce the spread of some diseases. While they are a little scary, they play an important role in our community.

## What to Do If Bitten

Copperheads would rather try and remain hidden than get close enough to bite you. However, if you are bitten by a copperhead, move out of the snake's striking distance and head to the emergency room or call 911. Get a picture of the snake if possible. Bites can be quite painful, but human fatalities from copperhead bites are extremely, extremely rare.

Remove constricting clothing or jewelry, as the area around the bite may swell. Keep the bite at or below the level of your heart, and remain calm to keep your heart rate down. Rinse the bite area if you have clean water with you. **Do NOT use a tourniquet.**



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