



## Venomous Snakes

First things first, let's have a quick look at the difference between "poisonous" and "venomous". If something is poisonous, then it has to enter the body either through the mouth or by being absorbed through the skin to have an effect. Because of this, poisonous animals use their poison to defend themselves, not to kill prey. Most poisonous animals don't make their own poison - they have to eat other animals or insects to build it up. Venomous animals use their venom to subdue or kill their prey, and they manufacture their own. Venom has to be injected directly into the bloodstream, either through fangs or a stinger. There are very few poisonous snakes, but there sure are a lot of venomous ones!

### The Taipan

Top of the list and definitely one to avoid being bitten by, is the taipan (officially called the inland taipan). Its venom is a mix of neurotoxins (that affect a victim's nervous system), procoagulants (they cause a victim's blood to clot quickly, creating fatal blood clots) and myotoxins (which cause victims to bleed significantly more and makes it harder to breathe). If untreated, its bite is lethal in around 80% of cases and can kill a human in under an hour. Keep an eye out if you are in its native habitat of Queensland, Australia.



### Eastern Brown Snake

No wonder Australia has a reputation for deadly animals, the eastern (or common) brown snake is also native to this sunny country. They are quick and found in almost every habitat. They can easily grow to 2 meters long and, despite the name, come in a range of shades. It is the second deadliest snake in the world and is responsible for about 60% of snakebite fatalities in Australia. They prefer to bite the upper thigh, and their venom causes massive bleeding and can stop your heart.



## King cobra

Depending on the source, some people consider the king cobra to be the longest venomous snake in the world (others argue that the black mamba can grow slightly longer). If one of these snakes latches on to your finger, it's unlikely to matter how long it is. Without medical help, the chances of you dying from the bite are around 50%, with each bite carrying enough venom to kill an Asian Elephant in just a few hours.



## Boomslang

The boomslang may be the inspiration behind the classic “snake dangling from a tree” that you see in so many adventure films. The name “boomslang” means “tree snake” in Afrikaans, and this African snake hunts by mimicking a tree. It extends the front of its body away from a branch, motionless. They are almost impossible to detect when walking through the forests, and the deadly venom prevents the victim's blood from clotting, causing them to bleed to death. The large fangs are located in a mouth that can open to 170° when it is about to bite!



### RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. Which snakes live in trees?
2. What is the full name of the deadliest snake on the list?
3. Which snake's bite is deadly in 50% of cases, if not treated?
4. Which snake causes most of the snakebite deaths in Australia?
5. Which type of toxin causes a victim's blood to clot more?

### VIPERS QUESTIONS

**S**

What are the differences between poisonous and venomous animals?

**V**

Which word in the text has a meaning closest to “overcome or bring under control”?

**I**

Why won't it matter how long a king cobra is if it's latching on to your finger?

**I**

Why might the boomslang be the reason for the snakes you see in films?

**V**

Which word in the text means “not moving at all”?