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**WARMER WEATHER BRINGS POTENTIAL FOR SNAKEBITES: EXPERTS ARE AVAILABLE TO PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO PREVENT SNAKEBITES**

***Tips Provided by the Oklahoma Poison Center***

OKLAHOMA CITY - During the spring, warmer temperatures and rain mean an increase in calls to the Oklahoma Poison Center regarding snakebites. Snakes are often well camouflaged and hidden from view to hide from predators. Piles of rocks, logs, sheds, and play structures are all places they may seek shelter. Specialists at the poison center work closely with physicians throughout Oklahoma to provide the best treatment advice for over 300 snakebite patients each year.

“Oklahoma is home to three types of venomous snakes, all pit vipers: the copperhead, cottonmouth (also known as a water moccasin) and several species of rattlesnake. Never go barefoot or wear open-toed shoes in areas where you can’t clearly see where you are placing your feet. When moving through tall grass or rocky areas always poke the ground ahead of you with a long stick to scare any snakes away.” said Kristie Edelen, assistant managing director of the Oklahoma Poison Center.

The Oklahoma Poison Center offers the following tips to help prevent snakebite this spring:

* DO NOT handle or play with snakes. Even dead snakes can bite reflexively.
* Keep your landscape or campsite well-manicured.
* Wear boots and long pants in areas known to have snakes and avoid walking alone in these areas.
* Watch where you step and place your hands when outdoors. Do not put your hands or feet into places you cannot see while hiking.
* Carry a flashlight, and wear shoes when walking outside after dark, even in areas you know.
* Stay on open ground; walk on clear paths and avoid sleeping on the ground. Place your sleeping bag away from caves and rock piles.
* Teach children to respect snakes and leave them alone. Check play structures, sand boxes and riding toys to expose snakes that may be hiding.

Pharmacists and registered nurses at the poison center are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at (800) 222-1222. Please do not email the poison center or a member of the poison center staff, as poisoning emergencies are not handled through email.

The Oklahoma Center for Poison and Drug Information is a program of the University of Oklahoma College of Pharmacy at the OU Health Sciences Center. For more information, log on to www.oklahomapoison.org.