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Is python snake dangerous

Skip to main content Official websites use .gov A .gov website belongs to an official government organization in the United States. Secure .gov websites use HTTPS A lock () or https:// means you've safely connected to the .gov website. Share sensitive information only on official, secure websites. It's common for many people to fear snakes. Even though scientists have proven that the fear of snakes is taught rather than inherent, it is still understandable. People fear what they don't know. Are pythons dangerous to humans? Most pythons are not dangerous to humans. There are a few exceptions with some of the larger species like reticulated pythons, but even then we see few reported fatalities. That being said, some risks to humans can be associated with pythons such as infection from bites, spread of disease and environmental concerns. Pythons That Can Eat You Are The Most Dangerous Contrary to popular belief, most species of pythons are way too small to eat a human. Even a baby human. Many people think of monstrous 30 foot long snakes when they think of pythons. The truth is, most are under 10 feet in length and are not very dangerous. There are a few species however, which really are big enough to eat you! Reticulated Python - As the worlds longest snake, the reticulated python has been known to grow to over 30 feet in length. More than long enough to eat a human! The biggest one we know of can be found in a zoo in Indonesia. It is reported to be nearly 49 feet long, and weigh an astounding 900 pounds!Rock Python - These snakes commonly grow to over 20 feet in length, and can weigh more than 200 pounds. A very powerful, thick bodied snake large enough to take on a human.Burmese Python - This is another very large python, often growing to lengths over 20 feet. Like the rock python, these snakes are heavy bodied and can weigh over 100 pounds.Indian Python - Though smaller than the previous three, the Indian python still grows large enough for humans to be potential prey. They have been known to grow up to 15 feet in length, and weigh over 100 pounds. Dangers From Python Bites The biggest potential risk to humans stems from python bites. Constrictors kill their prey by squeezing them, but most still have a mouth full of razor sharp teeth in order to grab and hold onto their prey. Two major risks stem from the bites of these snakes. The first is that the teeth can penetrate the skin deeply enough to sever a vein or artery. While possible, this is unlikely. The number one cause of snake bites is from handling them however, and your wrist is an easy target. Likewise, a strike to the face could end up hitting your neck and lacerating the jugular vein. Again, unlikely but possible. The second, and more probable risk, is that a bite becomes infected. Infections from animal bites are caused by the bacteria in their mouth entering the blood stream when the skin is penetrated. This can usually be prevented with antibiotics, but many people don't seek medical attention for a bite that doesn't require stitches, thus putting themselves at risk. Additional Dangers From Pythons The dangers listed above can be life threatening. More often than not however, you are at risk of injury rather than death. True Story I knew a person who got a female red-tailed boa as his first snake. She was somewhere in the range of five to six feet in length. Like many amateurs, he purchased the snake at a pet store, and it was wild caught. The snake was pretty calm and docile, and he'd never had any problem with it. One day he let his 12 year old son hold it, and the snake bit the boy in the face. The bite was so bad and so deep that it required 22 stitches. It turns out the snake had internal parasites, and was sick. Sick snakes can often times become aggressive. Here's my point: This was a pet snake which wasn't even very large (relatively speaking). One bite was enough for a trip to the hospital and 22 stitches! A python bite doesn't have to be life threatening for it to be dangerous. Poor Pet Husbandry Causes Python Risks Pythons are the most widely kept snake in North America. Out of necessity, most pet owners keep their snake in a warm, wet environment. Add to this the fact that the pet defecates in the enclosure, and either kills or eats pre-killed food in that same enclosure, and you have a recipe for health risks. Spores from mold and fungi travel through the air. Besides being inhaled, they can also land on surfaces outside of the cage. This exposes you to a wide range of health issues. Of course this is easily preventable by maintaining a clean and sanitary environment. It is still a danger associated with pythons. Cross Contamination From Pythons Can Be Dangerous The definition of cross contamination is the process of transferring bacteria or microorganisms from one object to another. When you handle a snake, you are basically putting your hands on everything that snake has touched. Saliva gets in the water bowl as it drinks. It then lays in that water bowl, getting the bacteria and microorganisms on its skin. Snakes often times defecate in the water as well. And if they don't, they are still coming in contact with their waste when they slither around their enclosure. Anything that the prey had on its body when it was eaten by the snake, can also be transferred. Every time you touch the snake, you are also transferring all of those things to your self. Again this is easily preventable. However, keeping a clean cage isn't enough. You should also wash your hands and arms after handling any snake. If it was in contact with your clothes, you should change and wash them as well. Dangers From Handling A Python Another risk associated with pythons happens when you handle them. Many people like to allow their snake to perch on their shoulders. Even a moderately sized snake of six feet or so, is more than capable of wrapping around your neck and strangling you. Think it can't happen? Just as recently as October 2019, a woman in Indiana was found dead with her 8 foot long python wrapped around her neck. An autopsy report showed that she was strangled. Pythons are almost entirely muscle. If one wraps around your neck, cutting off not only your breathing, but also blood flow to your brain, you have somewhere around 1-2 minutes to free yourself before you pass out. Clearly this does not happen often, or else you wouldn't see people carrying snakes around on their shoulder, but the risk is still very real. Are Pythons Venomous? I actually see this question a lot from people. You don't know until you ask, right? Are pythons venomous? No, pythons are not venomous. Pythons are a group of snakes known as Pythonidae, which are from Africa, Asia and Australia. Some species, such as the green tree python, have large teeth and fangs, but this is to hold onto prey, not to inject venom. Pythons kill prey by constriction. They do not have venom glands. The number one defense a python has is their bite, which they will definitely use if they feel threatened. And as I described earlier, the bite can be pretty painful. The bite itself is not intended to kill however. Other Risks From Pythons I'd say the number one risk posed by pythons isn't to humans, it's to their pets. A dog or a cat looks like a perfect meal to a snake that feeds on mammals. If a python were to wrap around one of your other pets, there is little chance that you would be able to get it off before the pet died. The Risk Goes Beyond A Direct Danger To Humans. Pythons are not native to North America. Unfortunately many irresponsible pet owners have released their snakes into the wild. Places like Florida are having a very real problem with snakes like Burmese pythons overtaking local wildlife and disrupting the ecosystem. This is leading to a decline in many native animal species. Non-native snakes disrupt the food chain. Not only do they consume more animals than are naturally reproduced, but they also make it harder for local predators to find food. Any risk to the local ecosystem is a risk to humans. Summary As you have seen, the potential for pythons to be dangerous to humans is very real. Most of these dangers are also very easily preventable. I have personally bred and raised reptiles, including pythons, for many years. I have never had a life threatening incident with any of my reptiles, nor have any other responsible keepers who I have personally known. If you don't own a pet python, the threat of danger is pretty much nonexistent. If you do own one, good husbandry practices and responsible pet ownership will typically be enough to keep you and those around you safe. To learn about raising captive snakes of your own, check out our care guide section! The Burmese python (Python bivittatus) is the third-largest species of snake in the world. Although native to tropical southern Asia, the beautifully patterned, docile snakes are popular throughout the world as pets. Scientific Name: Python bivittatusCommon Name: Burmese pythonBasic Animal Group: ReptileSize: 12 feetWeight: 15-165 poundsDiet: CarnivoreLifespan: 20 yearsHabitat: Tropical rainforests of southern Asia; invasive in FloridaPopulation: Unknown; rare in the wildConservation Status: Vulnerable The wild form of the snake has black-bordered brown blotches on a lighter brown background. Captive-bred species come in other colors and patterns, including albino, green, labyrinth, and granite morphs. Albino Burmese Python. Stuart Doo / Getty Images Wild pythons average 3.7 m (12.2 ft), but specimens exceeding 4 m (13 ft) are not uncommon. Rarely, snakes attain lengths between 5 and 6 meters in length. Females are slightly larger than males, but much thicker and heavier. Recorded weights of mature females range from 14 to 75 kg (30 to 165 lb), while weights of males range from 7 to 15 kg (15 to 33 lb). Dwarf forms of the snake occur in some parts of its range and in captivity. Burmese pythons live in tropical regions of southern Asia, always near a permanent source of water. While they are excellent climbers with prehensile tails, they may be found in grasslands and marshes as well as woodlands and jungles. The species is invasive in the southeastern United States. Burmese python range in Asia. Terminjinja Like other terrestrial snakes, burmese pythons are carnivores that feed mainly on mammals and birds. The snake is a constrictor that captures and kills prey by biting it and holding it with its rear-pointing teeth, wrapping its coils around prey, contracting its muscles, and suffocating the animal. Prey size depends on snake size. A young python may eat rodents, while a mature specimen can take livestock, adult deer, and alligators. Burmese pythons don't hunt humans, but they have caused some deaths. Burmese pythons adapt their physiology to prey availability. The snakes are opportunistic and will eat whenever prey is offered. Obesity is common in captive specimens. When fasting, the snake has a normal heart volume, reduced stomach volume and acidity, and reduced intestinal mass. Once prey is ingested, the ventricle of the snake's heart increases 40% in mass to aid digestion, its intestines gain mass, and its stomach enlarges and produces more acid. The Burmese python is an apex predator that doesn't face many threats by other animals. Hatchlings may be preyed upon by birds of prey and other carnivores. In Florida, Burmese pythons, depending on their size, may be preyed upon by alligators and crocodiles. Burmese pythons are primarily nocturnal. Younger, smaller snakes are equally comfortable in trees or on the ground, while larger, more massive snakes prefer the rainforest floor. Most of the snake's time is spent hidden in underbrush. The snakes can stay underwater up to 30 minutes and are excellent swimmers. In cold weather, the snake may brumate in a tree. Brumation is a period of motionlessness and low metabolism, but it isn't the same as true hibernation. Mating occurs in early spring. Females lay clutch of 12 to 36 eggs in March or April. They incubate the eggs until they hatch by wrapping around them and twitching their muscles to release heat. The female leaves the eggs once they hatch. A hatchling uses its egg tooth to break free of its shell and may remain with the egg until after molting before venturing out to hunt. Burmese pythons live about 20 years. There is evidence Burmese pythons, unlike most reptiles, can reproduce asexually via parthenogenesis. One captive female, isolated from males, produced viable eggs for five years. A genetic analysis confirmed the offspring were genetically identical to their mother. The IUCN lists the Burmese python as "vulnerable" within its range. All of the large pythons face challenges because they are killed to make leather, used in folk medicine, eaten as food, and captured for the pet trade. To a lesser extent, habitat destruction affects the snakes, too. While the Burmese python occupies a large range, its population has continued to decline. Meanwhile, the snake's population growth in Florida poses a significant threat to other wildlife. The Burmese python gained a foothold in the United States when Hurricane Andrew destroyed a python breeding facility in 1992. The escaped snakes spread into the Everglades. The release or escape of pet snakes has contributed to the problem. As of 2007, Burmese pythons were found in Mississippi and throughout much of Florida. Where the snakes are well-established, populations of foxes, rabbits, raccoons, opossums, white-tailed deer, panthers, coyotes, and birds are seriously depressed or have disappeared. Pythons compete with the American alligator and also prey upon it. Pets and livestock in affected regions are at risk, as well. Florida sponsors hunting contests; regulates the importation, breeding, and sale of reptiles; and works to raise public awareness of invasive species. However, Burmese pythons remain a problem in the southeastern United States. Campden-Main SM. A Field Guide to the Snakes of South Vietnam. Washington, District of Columbia. pp. 8-9, 1970. Mazzotti, F. 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