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Schools along EM Bypass take fresh guard against snakes

More Focus On Safety Of Students

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Kolkata: New-age schools being developed on the wetlands are giving additional focus to undertaking safety audits to eradicate snakes, especially during the monsoon season.

A recent snakebite incident at a reputed private school off EM Bypass served as an eye-opener, prompting several institutions to review their safety protocols to prevent similar occurrences. The school had already taken measures and has gone through an inspection immediately after a class 3 student was bitten by a snake on Aug 18 in a school washroom. The school on Aug 27 is organising a special session to raise awareness among students and teachers about what their response should be if such a situation arises.

IMMEDIATE FIRST AID STEPS

- **Keep the victim calm and still:** Have the person sit or lie down comfortably
- **Immobilize the bitten limb:** Keep the affected arm or leg as still as possible
- **Remove tight items immediately:** Take off rings, bracelets, watches, shoes, or tight clothing near the bite area before swelling begins
- **Clean the wound gently:** Clean the bite site and cover

it loosely with a clean, dry cloth or sterile bandage

- **Transport to a medical facility:** Head to the nearest hospital equipped with anti-snake venom

DO NOT

- Attempt to cut the bite mark or suck out the venom
- Apply a tight tourniquet or rope around the limb, as this can cause tissue necrosis or severe localised injury

The incident came as a sudden shock to students and parents across all the private schools in city. Several schools held review meetings to oversee their arrangements and determine whether they needed to add or rectify anything.

Speaking with the managements of the new-age schools that have been established either in the New Town area or near the East Kolkata Wetlands, they emphasized putting extra stress on freeing their campuses from venomous

insects and, especially, snakes. During the monsoon, restricting the entry of reptiles and insects is the most challenging task for these school managements. After this incident, some of them alerted students to be cautious while wearing shoes and socks.

Madhumita Sengupta, the principal of BDM International held a review meeting last week after hearing about the snakebite incident. She reinforced all the measures they already have in place and took a

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look at whether grass cleaning and other tasks were being followed everyday. She said, "The incident is an alarm for all the schools and we have taken the matter very seriously. We usually do two types of pest control—one specifically done for snakes. During the monsoon, we increase its frequency. Apart from that, we have a committee with clear instructions to check all the classrooms and washrooms. We have clear instructions for the children: if they take off their shoes anywhere, they should be observant. We keep our campus clean." She stated that they do not allow open spaces through which such reptiles could enter.

The New Town School principal, Satabdi Bhattacharjee, said, "We do pest control weekly, and we have our own

estate manager and his team who regularly inspect the entire area and take necessary action as per requirement. We have an in-house gardener to clean the entire area, especially to ensure that bushes and long grasses do not develop in and around the school. Moreover, we do not have open spaces from where these sorts of reptiles can enter."

DPS Newtown School principal Ambica Mehra said that they continuously carry out snake treatment at their school. "Every day after the school gets dispersed and cleaned, droplets of medicine are put on the windows, doors, washrooms, and classrooms. Even the teachers have warned the children not to sit very close to the walls." She mentioned that small bottles carrying medicines to keep snakes away are dug into the mud along the boundary. They also clean long bushes on a daily basis.

An official from the education dept said, "Schools should keep an extra eye on students' safety, especially since they charge hefty school fees."