Snake Facts

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

- Snakes jaws are not fused together. This means that unlike humans, snakes jaws are not hooked together at the back of their mouth.
- Snakes don't have eyelids. They have a clear scale that covers their eye called a spectacle or brille.
- Snakes do not have skin like a human. They have scales which create armor so that they are able to move around on rough surfaces without getting hurt.
- Most snakes have teeth, but only venomous snakes have fangs.
- All snakes swallow their food whole. Although they have teeth, they are not actually used to chew up their food, but rather to grab and hold their prey.
- Snakes don't need to eat like humans. Some snakes only eat a few times a year. It can take up to a couple of months for some snakes to digest their food.
- Snakes are cold-blooded, and cannot live in places where it is cold year round. During the cold months snakes hibernate, which is like sleeping for an extended period of time.
- Snakes are born with an egg tooth that is used to tear out of their egg or the membrane they are born in. They will lose this tooth soon after hatching.
- Some snakes will stay with their eggs until they hatch, while others lay their eggs and never return to them.
- Snakes reproduce once every one to three years.
- Snake eggs are not hard like a bird's, but rather soft and leathery.
- Although snakes are often described as being "slimy," they are actually very dry.

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■ A snake's tongue is not used to taste or aid in swallowing like a human's tongue. It is actually an accessory smelling organ.

■ Some snakes have a "sixth sense" that mammals and other reptiles do not. They have special pits between their eyes and their nostrils that sense heat from heat sources that are close to the snake. This helps them with locating prey. Snakes that have these pits are members of a family of snakes referred to as 'pit vipers.'

■ If you ever see a snake being charmed/hypnotized by someone playing the flute, it doesn't actually work like that. Snakes don't hear sound like a human does. They use a small ear bone called the "columella" to detect vibrations of sound waves conducted through the ground. They can only pick up very low frequency sound waves through the air.

■ Although snakes have two lungs, their left lung is a vestigial organ. Vestigial means that it is a small, non-functioning organ.

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