



GOA Community Services – View Me (GOA CS-VM)

TRADITIONAL PLANTAIN–COCOYAM REMEDY FOR BITES: THE TRUTH, THE RISKS, AND THE SAFEST WAY FOR TODAY’S WORLD

Health Article

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In some villages in Africa we discovered that when a snake or dog bites someone, people often practice a traditional healing method passed down from their elders.

They run into the backyard, cut the watery stem of a green plantain tree, and begin scraping the wound with it until it bleeds.

After this, they cut the green stem of a cocoyam plant and allow the sap to drip directly onto the wound.

Once this is done, they say, “It is finished.”

This method has been used for generations, and many believe it helps draw out poison, neutralize toxins, or cleanse the wound. The intention is good, and in emergencies — especially in places far from hospitals — people simply use what they know and what they have.

But today, we must discuss this practice with respect, wisdom, and truth, so that every family in the GOA Community can stay safe.

UNDERSTANDING THE TRADITIONAL METHOD

1. The Green Plantain Stem

Villagers cut the young plantain stem because it releases a lot of clear, clean water.

They use it to:

scratch the wound lightly

help blood come out

wash the bite with plantain water

The belief is that the bleeding and the plantain sap reduce poison and infection.

2. The Cocoyam Stem

The cocoyam stem also contains water.

When they drip it onto the wound, they believe it:

cools the skin

neutralizes harmful substance

completes the healing process

These ideas did not come from science, but from observation, instinct, and the wisdom of survival in ancient communities.

*** Some small benefits actually exist:**

Plantain sap has mild antibacterial properties.

Cocoyam sap can give a cooling sensation and may clean the area.

Allowing the wound to bleed a little may wash away surface dirt.

**** But these methods do NOT:**

remove snake venom

neutralize rabies virus

stop internal poisoning

protect a person from death if the animal is dangerous

This is where the danger lies.

Because people feel “treated,” they may delay proper help, which can cost a life.

**** IF THERE IS NO HOSPITAL NEARBY: THE SAFEST WAY TO USE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE**

We respect traditional medicine. It has saved many lives when nothing

else was available.

But we must practice it correctly so we do not cause more harm.

**** If a snake bites someone:**

DO NOT SCRATCH the bite.

Scratching allows venom to spread faster.

Instead:

- 1. Keep the person calm and still.**
- 2. Keep the leg or arm straight and unmoving.**
- 3. Wash gently with clean running water only.**
- 4. Tie a loose band above the bite — not tight, just enough to slow venom.**
- 5. Use plantain water only to clean, not to scratch.**
- 6. Move the person to the nearest clinic, chemist, or health worker immediately.**

**** If a dog bites someone:**

It may carry rabies, which is 100% deadly without treatment.

Do this:

- 1. Immediately wash the wound under running water with soap for 15 minutes.**
- 2. Use plantain or cocoyam water ONLY as an additional wash — not as treatment.**
- 3. Keep the wound open (don't cover).**

4. Send the person to ANY health facility, even a small clinic, for rabies vaccine.

THE STANDARD MODERN METHOD (Most Effective & Safe)

Science has advanced dramatically.

While our ancestors did their best with what they had, today we have stronger, safer solutions.

For Snake Bites

Antivenom is the ONLY effective cure for venom.

Painkillers, fluids, and observation are required.

Scratching or cutting the wound is dangerous.

Sucking venom is dangerous.

Plantain and cocoyam cannot stop venom.

For Dog Bites

Rabies vaccine and immunoglobulin save lives.

Modern cleaning agents kill bacteria better.

Tetanus shots prevent serious complications.

Why modern medicine is more effective:

It works inside the body where venom or virus spreads.

It stops poisoning at the blood and nerve level.

It protects the brain and vital organs.

It gives near 100% survival when used on time.

BRINGING TRADITION & MODERN MEDICINE TOGETHER

Our traditional methods come from love — the desire to save life immediately.

Modern medicine comes from knowledge — the ability to protect the body scientifically.

The best approach is to combine both:

Use traditional steps **ONLY** as first aid, not final treatment.

Use hospital treatment as the main cure.

This is the wisdom needed in today's world.

If a hospital is far, use clean water, calm the patient, and move immediately.

If you must use plantain or cocoyam water, use it only to rinse, **NOT** to scratch or replace treatment.

Always follow up with a clinic, chemist, or health centre.

Your life is precious.

Your family is precious.

And knowledge is protection.

FINAL WORD TO THE GOA COMMUNITY

As we continue to teach health and healing in the GOA Community Services -View Me (GOA CS-VM) Health Education, we honour our elders, but we embrace wisdom.

Traditional methods can support first aid
—but only modern treatment can save a life fully.

Prepared and presented by GOA Community Services – View Me (GOA CS-VM)