



# dangerous creatures

## lionfish

### Distribution

Lionfish are found around reefs and rocky crevices throughout the Eastern Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea and the Indo-Pacific region including Australian waters south to Lord Howe Island and southwestern Western Australia.

### Size and appearance

Lionfish are red, brown, orange, yellow, black or white in colour, and rely on their striped appearance for camouflage. Lionfish have long, showy pectoral fins that they use to herd the small fish they prey on. They may grow to approximately 40cm in length and weigh up to 1.2kg. Lionfish have 13 needle-like dorsal spines through which they deliver venom.

### Symptoms and signs

Contact with the dorsal spines of lionfish may result in puncture wounds that are extremely painful. Swelling of the area, nausea, headaches, vomiting, abdominal pain, seizures, paralysis of limbs and respiratory and heart complications may result. Lionfish envenomation is rarely fatal in humans but several months may be needed for a full recovery and gangrene may develop if wounds are left untreated.

### First aid

1. Immerse the affected area in hot water – as hot as the rescuer can stand with their elbow.
2. Rest and reassure the patient.
3. Oxygen therapy may be required.
4. Seek medical aid – local anaesthetic may provide pain relief and an x-ray of the wound should be performed to detect any presence of broken spines.

### How to avoid them

- Do not touch, threaten or provoke lionfish.
- When diving or snorkelling maintain a safe distance.

### Did you know?

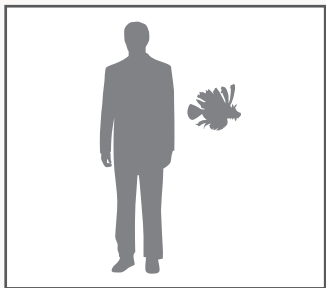
- The average life span for lionfish in the wild is up to 15 years.
- The venom in the spines remains active for days, so even discarded spines and dead animals should be treated with caution.



*Pterois volitans*



*Distribution in Australian waters*



*Size relative to human*



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