



dangerous creatures

blue-ring octopus

Distribution

The blue-ring octopus is found in tidal pools and mud flats all around Australia.

Size and appearance

Up to 20cm in diameter (with tentacles extended), blue-ring octopus are usually yellow to pale brown in colour when resting. It is only when it is irritated and feels threatened that the small electric blue rings or bars pulsate as a warning to other animals.

Symptoms and signs

Usually painless bite through which the octopus injects a neuromuscular paralysing venom that is contained within its saliva. Muscle weakness, often preceded by tingling around the mouth, blurred vision and difficulty swallowing, may affect the muscles which control breathing within 10 minutes, leading to respiratory arrest and possibly death. Often victims are aware but unable to respond.

First aid

1. Call 000.
2. Emergency care – rescue breathing should be commenced before severe breathing difficulties or blueness of the lips occurs.
3. Pressure-immobilization bandaging of the site – should be left in place until resuscitation facilities are available.
4. Seek medical aid – currently only treatment is intermittent positive pressure ventilation (the use of rescue breathing and oxygen therapy) until the venom has worked its way out of the patient's system with spontaneous breathing usually returning in 3-10 hours.

How to avoid them

- Look but don't touch. Never handle any small octopuses.
- Be careful when fossicking through rock pools.
- Wear sturdy shoes when walking around tidal pools and across mud flats.

Did you know?

- The blue-ring octopus has a life span of approximately 2 years.
- Each individual blue-ring octopus carries enough venom to kill 26 adults within minutes.
- The beak (mouth) of a blue-ring octopus can penetrate a wet-suit.



Hapalochlaena lunulata



Distribution in Australian waters



Size relative to human hand



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