



# marinestingers

## general guidelines

Australia's waters contain many sea creatures, including marine stingers. Although they are generally quite easy to avoid, stingers can cause discomfort if you are stung and some tropical species (the Irukandji and the Box Jellyfish, for example) can be lethal. So, to ensure you enjoy your day at the beach, always remember to swim at a patrolled beach and look out for the safety signs.

### Prevention

- Always swim at patrolled beaches, between the red and yellow flags.
- Look for and obey safety signs.
- Don't enter the water when beaches are closed.
- Ask a lifesaver or lifeguard for help and advice if you need it.
- Don't touch marine stingers washed up on the beach, they can still sting you.

In tropical waters it is also recommended that you take these additional measures.

- Swim in the stinger nets where provided.
- It is recommended that a full-body lycra suit, or equivalent, be worn to provide a good measure of protection against marine stings, particularly during the stinger season, which generally runs from November to March.
- Enter the water slowly – this gives marine stingers time to move away.

### Treatment

If you are stung, or are with someone else who has been stung, the treatment will vary depending on your location and what type of stinger is involved.

**In tropical waters** (generally north of Bundaberg in Queensland and Geraldton in Western Australia)

Jellyfish capable of causing life-threatening stings primarily occur along the tropical coastline of Australia from Bundaberg in Queensland northwards, across the northern coastline and down to Geraldton in Western Australia. In areas where dangerous tropical jellyfish are prevalent, (e.g. Box Jellyfish or Irukandji), if the species causing the sting cannot be clearly identified, it is safer, to treat the victim with vinegar.

#### Treatment for tropical jellyfish stings

- Remove the patient from the water and restrain if necessary.
- Call for help (dial 000 or get a surf lifesaver or lifeguard to help you).
- Assess the patient and commence CPR as necessary.
- Liberally douse the stung area with vinegar to neutralise invisible stinging cells – do not wash with fresh water
- If vinegar is unavailable, pick off any remnants of the tentacles (this is not harmful to the rescuer) and rinse sting well with seawater (not freshwater).
- Seek medical assistance with rapid transport to hospital.



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## general guidelines (cont.)

**In non-tropical waters** (generally south of both Bundaberg in Queensland and Geraldton in Western Australia)

- Keep the patient at rest and under constant observation.
- Do not allow rubbing of the sting area.
- Pick off any remaining tentacles with fingers (a harmless prickling may be felt).
- Rinse the stung area well with seawater to remove any invisible stinging cells.

The next steps are dependent on what type of stinger is involved.

### **For Bluebottle stings**

- Place the patient's stung area in hot water (no hotter than the rescuer can comfortably tolerate).
- If the pain is unrelieved by the heat, or if hot water is not available, apply cold packs or wrapped ice.

### **For other non-tropical minor jellyfish stings**

- Do not wash the sting with fresh water.
- Apply cold packs or wrapped ice for pain.
- If local pain is unrelieved by these treatments, or generalised pain develops, or the sting area is large (half of a limb or more), or if the patient appears to be suffering an allergic reaction to the sting, seek urgent medical help (dial 000 or get a surf lifesaver or lifeguard).



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