

Poster: Dangerous Marine Creatures

Region

North Coast, Gascoyne Coast, West Coast, South Coast, Indian Ocean Territories

Summary

Animals have developed feeding and defence mechanisms to help them survive in their natural habitats. We need to be aware of these to avoid being accidentally injured.

DANGEROUS MARINE CREATURES

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ANIMALS WITH SPINES

Fish with spines include stingrays, cobbler (or catfish), flathead, stonefish, scorpioncod, lionfish and Port Jackson shark. The spines contain venom, which is released on contact with the skin. This venom may cause extreme pain, depending on the size of the fish and the amount of venom injected.

Handle the fish carefully to avoid the fins and gills where spines may be located. Some stingrays have a barb at the base of the tail, which is highly mobile and can inflict a harmful injury. If you do hook a stingray, cut the line near the fish's mouth rather than trying to remove the hook - but be careful of the tail.

FIRST AID FOR VENOMOUS SPINES

1. Remove the patient from the water.
2. Apply pressure to the wound to stop bleeding.
3. Immerse the wounded limb in hot water (be careful not to burn the skin).
4. Immobilise the limb and cover with a clean dressing.
5. Send for an ambulance/medical help.

ANIMALS THAT BITE

Be aware that many fish have sharp teeth and that some marine animals will bite if they feel threatened. If you get bitten, apply pressure to the wounded area to stop bleeding. It may be necessary to seek medical aid. Some animals can be potentially deadly to humans, including the cone shell, blue-ringed octopus and sea snakes. Leave them well alone.

ANIMALS THAT STING

Sea jellies (jellyfish) are the most common stinger encountered at the beach. Corals and anemones also have stinging cells, which can inflict a painful sting to humans.

For jellyfish stings where there is minimal pain, apply a cold compress. Vinegar is not appropriate for some species, particularly the bluebottle (Portuguese man-o-war).

Do not put water on **any** jellyfish sting, as it could set off undischarged stings.

If stung by a box jellyfish, remove the patient from the sea, being careful to avoid contact with further tentacles. Flood the stung area with vinegar to neutralise stinging cells and seek urgent medical aid.

ANIMALS THAT ARE POISONOUS TO EAT

Puffer fish, including northwest blowfish, toadfish and porcupine fish - including the common "blowie" - are poisonous to eat. They contain a strong toxin which attacks the nervous system, resulting in paralysis and the inability to see, swallow or speak. However, the victim may remain conscious! Seek **URGENT** medical aid. Expired air resuscitation (EAR) may be necessary.

LIONFISH

BOX JELLY

STINGRAY

BLUEBOTTLE

BLOWFISH

BLUE-RINGED OCTOPUS

PORCUPINE FISH

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