

A pain in the neck.

Spinal Injury Awareness.



Why is spinal injury awareness important to you?

Every year, a number of spinal injuries occur around the beach by accident and through participation in high risk activities. Spinal injuries can cause serious injury and disability and the initial first aid and treatment may have an important impact on the outcome. It is critical that you know what to do in the event that someone around you may have received one.



What is a spinal injury and how can they occur?

A spinal injury happens when damage to a person's spine occurs. This can be anywhere from the tail bone up to the top of the neck, where a spinal injury can have the most serious consequences.

Spinal injuries can happen any number of ways, but most commonly by:

- Being dumped headfirst by a wave
- Diving head first into the water
- Jumping off rocks (sometimes called "tombstoning")
- Hitting submerged objects other than the sea floor.

Any neck soreness or pain should be treated as a potential spinal injury.

How can you reduce the risk of obtaining a spinal injury?

Swim only in supervised areas and always check for hazards and the depth of the water before diving or jumping. If you are unsure of the depth, always enter the water feet first. If in doubt, check with the lifesaver or lifeguard on duty as to conditions at your local beach. The following signs may indicate these hidden dangers:



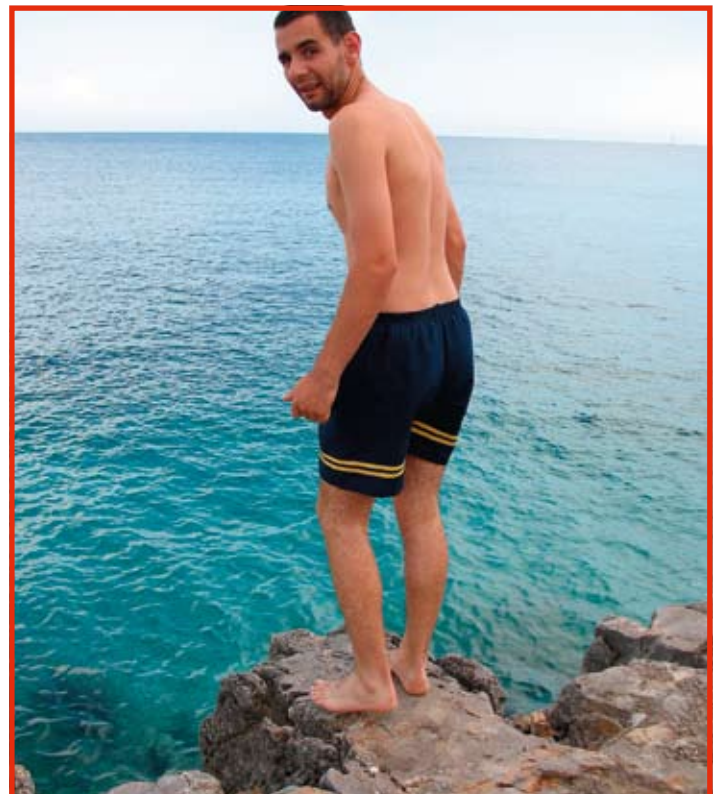
SUBMERGED
OBJECTS



SHALLOW
WATER



SHORE
DUMP



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What if you think you may have obtained a spinal injury?

If you suspect you have a spinal injury – **DON'T MOVE** and call for assistance.

After an impact such as a dive or fall where you experience the following you should seek immediate assistance:

- Pain or an intense stinging sensation
- Loss of movement
- Loss of sensation, including the ability to feel heat, cold and touch
- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Exaggerated reflex activities or spasms
- Difficulty breathing, coughing or clearing your lungs.

What if you are with someone that may have obtained a spinal injury?

In the event of a suspected spinal injury:

- Request the person to remain still
- Stabilise their head and neck
- Then seek trained lifesaver or lifeguard immediately
- If there is no rescue service available, contact '000' or '112'
- Avoid moving the person.

If they are in the water, treatment is as follows:

- If the person is face down, remove the patient's face from the water and try to stabilise the neck
- Assess the person's breathing - this must take priority
- Unless wave or water conditions dictate otherwise, if the patient is breathing normally, ensure a lifeguard or lifesaver has been notified and do not move the patient
- If there is no rescue service available, contact '000' or '112' and the rescue can proceed in an unhurried manner with every effort made to minimise movement of the spine
- Avoid moving the person where possible.



To enjoy the beach safely, remember:

FLAGS

Find the red and yellow flags and swim between them.

Look at, understand and obey the safety signs.

Ask a lifeguard or lifesaver for advice before you enter the water.

Get a friend to swim with you.

Stick your hand up, stay calm and call for help if you get into trouble.

