

# Rip Currents.

A common beach hazard.



## Why is it important to know about rip currents?

For any person who visits the beach in their life, it is more than likely that you have been or will get caught in a rip current. The outcome of this experience will depend on your awareness of how to deal with this situation when it happens. Each year 89% of beach rescues and at least 40% of drowning deaths are due to rip currents.

## What do rip currents look like?

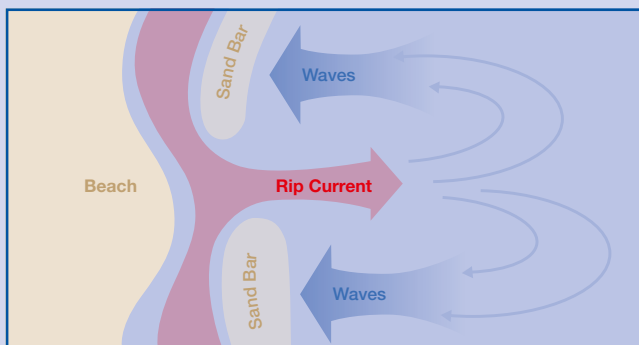
Not all rip currents look the same but one or more of following natural features might alert you to the presence of one:

- Darker water, indicating deeper water
- Murky brown water caused by sand stirred up by faster moving water
- A choppy or rippled look, when the water around is generally calm
- In large surf, a smoother surface with much smaller waves
- An area with a lack of breaking waves on a beach with surf at the time
- Foam or debris floating out to sea

## What are rip currents?

A rip current, sometimes referred to as a rip, is a strong current beginning around the shore that runs away from the beach. It may feel like you are in a flowing/moving river.

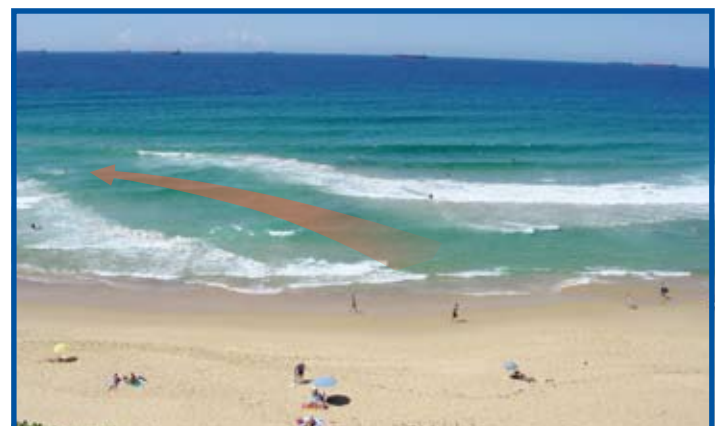
If you find yourself moving out to sea and you are unable to get back to the beach, it is more than likely you are in a rip current. Not all rip currents flow directly out to sea, some may run parallel to the beach before ultimately heading out to sea.



Idealised schematic of a rip current system



The "Bondi Express" with rip current schematic.



Overhead view of a rip current.



View of a rip current from the beach.

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Make sure you also look out for the following safety signs that may also indicate a rip current is present:



NO SWIMMING



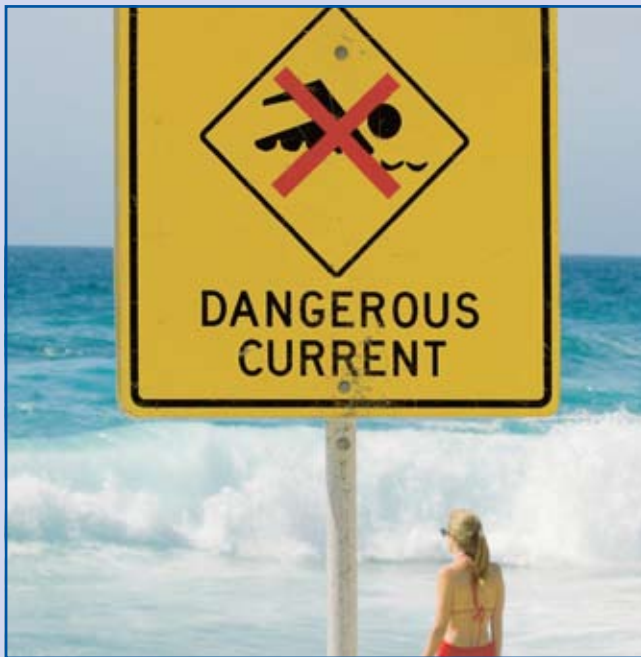
SWIMMING NOT ADVISED



STRONG CURRENTS



BEACH CLOSED



SWIMMING NOT ADVISED, DANGEROUS CURRENT

If you find yourself in a rip current, follow these steps:

- Do not panic
- Do not try and swim against the rip current
- If you are confident, SWIM PARALLEL TO THE BEACH – often this is towards the breaking waves, which can then assist you back to shore
- If at anytime you feel you will be unable to reach the beach, raise your arm and call for assistance while floating to conserve your energy
- Always stay calm.

To avoid getting caught in a rip current, ensure you:

- Swim between the red and yellow flags: NO FLAGS = NO SWIM
- Observe any safety signs
- Understand what a rip current is
- Know how to spot a rip current
- Do not swim in or near a rip current.



To enjoy the beach safely, remember:

# FLAGS

**F** Find the red and yellow flags and swim between them.

**L** Look at, understand and obey the safety signs.

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

**G** Get a friend to swim with you.

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

