



BEACH SAFETY

While the beach can be a great place to cool off this summer, it's also important to respect the power of the ocean. One of the leading causes of accidental death in the United States is drowning; killing nearly 5,000 people each year. For children ages 1 to 2 years old, it's usually the leading cause of death year after year.

Basic Beach Safety Tips:

- Make sure lifeguards are on duty and ask about surf conditions before going in the water. Try and swim in an area near a lifeguard tower and never swim alone. Only swim in designated areas.
- Never dive in the surf head first. The water is not always clear and you may not notice any obstructions or how shallow the water in front of you is.
- Don't swim out to far or overestimate your swimming ability. Never depend on flotation devices for your safety. Swim parallel to the shore if you want to swim long distances.
- Never drink alcohol and swim.
- ALWAYS keep an eye on your children. Don't turn away, even for a moment. Children can fall below the surface in a second and it can be impossible to find them fast enough.
- Always hold the hands of younger children. Sudden changes in surf direction can separate them from you in an instant.
- Swim parallel to the shore if you want to swim long distances.
- Wear "Water Shoes" or sandals on the beach to avoid broken glass and sharp shells.
- Lightning strikes at the beach are common in thunder storms. If you hear thunder, get out of the water immediately. Seek shelter in a building or automobile. If no shelter is available, find the lowest spot possible and avoid open spaces. Don't sit under an umbrella and stay away from metal objects like aluminum chairs.
- If you get into trouble in the water, don't panic. Raise and wave your arm for help, float and wait for assistance.
- Wear sunscreen, with at least a level 15 sun protection factor, to protect against burns.

What is a "Rip Tide?"

Often mistakenly called undertows, these powerful currents pull even experienced swimmers away from shore. Panic and drowning often result. The currents are formed when water rushes out to sea in a narrow path. This happens when there is a break in a near-shore sandbar or the current is diverted by a groin, jetty or other barrier. Rip currents can extend 1,000 feet offshore, reach 100 feet in width and travel up to 3 mph. Some are present a few hours; others are permanent. Rip currents are more prevalent after storms.

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