Why is non-tropical marine stinger safety important to you?

Australia’s waters are home to many interesting sea creatures, including jellyfish collectively known as marine stingers. Although they are generally quite easy to avoid, stingers can cause discomfort if you are stung. The intensity and severity of the sting from a marine stinger varies with geographical location and the health and fitness of the victim.

What are non-tropical marine stingers and what do they look like?

Non-tropical marine stingers, such as the bluebottle (physalia) or hair jelly (cyanea), maybe found anywhere on the Australian coastline but usually south of tropical Queensland (south of Bundaberg) and south of tropical Western Australia (south of Geraldton). Their stingers, while not generally life threatening, can cause distress and discomfort when come into contact with.

How can you best protect yourself against non-tropical marine stingers?

Some simple rules for safe swimming apply to help reduce the risk of incidents involving marine stingers:

- Always swim at patrolled beaches, between the red and yellow flags.
- Look for and obey safety signs.
- Don’t touch marine stingers washed up on the beach, they can still sting you.
- 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.

- Don’t enter the water when beaches are closed.
- Ask a lifesaver or lifeguard for help and advice if you need it.

Circulation area of marine stingers in Australia
What should be done if you get a non-tropical marine sting?

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 non-tropical waters, the treatment is as follows:

**For Bluebottle stings**
- 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.
- 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**
- 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.
- 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 112 and get a surf lifesaver or lifeguard).

For more information, go to www.marinestingers.com.au/safety