

# Snorkelling safety

Snorkelling is a wonderful pastime that provides a relatively easily accessible window to the underwater world and that is enjoyed safely by millions of people of a wide variety of ages. However, snorkelling does present some risks to the unwary, and sometimes to the experienced.

Snorkelling is conducted in a potentially hostile and changeable environment that can sometimes feature rough seas, cold water and strong currents. It also brings you into close contact with marine animals, which, in defending themselves, can sometimes cause you harm. Powerboats can also present potential danger.

In addition, you need to be in good health, and fit enough to safely meet the physical demands of snorkelling. Certain medical conditions may lead to complications while snorkelling. If you have breathing problems such as asthma, a cardiac condition, problems with your ears or sinuses, or any other medical problems, seek advice from your doctor before taking up snorkelling.

**The safe snorkelling practices, listed on the following page, have been compiled for your review and acknowledgement and are intended to increase your comfort and safety in snorkelling. Your signature on this statement is required as an understanding that you are aware of these safe snorkelling practices. Read and discuss if necessary this statement prior to signing. If you are a minor, this form must also be signed by a parent or guardian.**

I, (print name) \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the following snorkel safety practices and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction. I understand the importance and purposes of these established practices. I acknowledge they are for my own safety and well-being.

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Participants Signature

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Contact Phone

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Date

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Signature of Parent or Guardian if Under 18

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Contact Phone

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Date

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Name of Emergency Contact Person

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Contact Phone

See tips on "Safe Snorkelling Practices" on the next page.



## Safe snorkelling practices

Snorkelling can be physically strenuous. Ensure you have an adequate level of fitness.

You should generally be a competent swimmer to take up snorkelling. A poor swimmer can sometimes snorkel relatively safely with the aid of a buoyancy jacket, but this requires care and close supervision.

Certain medical conditions would disqualify you from snorkelling on grounds of safety. Consult a doctor who understands the demands of snorkelling to ensure you are medically fit.

Consider a formal snorkelling course. Such a course will ensure that you are taught the necessary skills, are informed of the risks associated with snorkelling, and it will advise on the selection of equipment.

Before you progress from shallow water (1.5m) you should be able to comfortably perform these skills:

- Snorkel breathing and clearing;
- Mask clearing;
- Duck diving;
- Ear clearing; and
- Weight belt ditching (if a weight belt is necessary).

Know the marine life in your region that could pose problems; what potential risks they present, how to minimise these risks, and what to do if an injury occurs.

Don't dive if you are unwell. Even a cold will seriously impair you.

Be well-rested, well-fed, and well-hydrated.

Snorkel with a buddy.

Your breathhold time should be well within your limits of comfort. Do not force it, as it is possible to blackout without warning.

Do not hyperventilate (a series of forceful deep breaths prior to holding your breath.) You risk blackout without any warning.

Do not breathhold dive into or under any overhead environment (cave, wreckage, overhand) where you risk being trapped.

Never snorkel at night unless adequately prepared with equipment and the conditions are stable.

Inform others that you are going snorkelling. Tell them your intended location and approximate return time.

Do not snorkel in areas where obvious dangers exist. Examples are areas with strong current, water with poor visibility, places where others are fishing, or areas with a lot of boat traffic.

Follow a "look but don't touch" policy. In this way you minimise the risk of injury from marine organisms, and you will avoid damaging fragile marine growth.

If you begin to feel tired, cold or uncomfortable, terminate your dive.

But, most of all, enjoy the fantastic opportunities that snorkelling has to offer.

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