









Otter Aquatics Newsletter

No 42. November 2018

Dear swimmers and others

Welcome to the November 2018 edition of the Otter Aquatics newsletter. This month, as the warmer weather is approaching, we spend a bit of time addressing the question: 'how afraid should we be of sharks?' We also spend a little time on marine stingers – how to identify them and, importantly, how to treat their stings.

Look inside to find:

-  Sharks – should we be worried about them as we venture into ocean swimming?
-  Marine stingers – the curse of the open water swimmer
-  Swimming technique myth #2: you need to pull past your hip
-  2019 European swimming holidays
-  Exercise: the key to good heart health
-  And our quiz, quote and pic of the month.



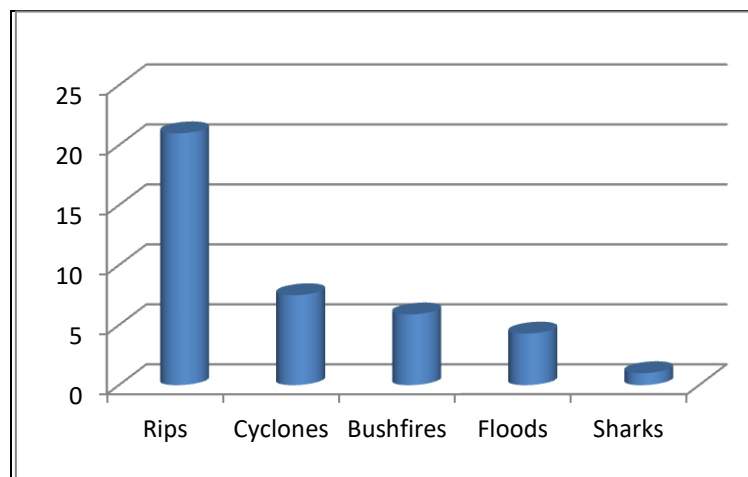
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- › Learn-to-swim instruction, stroke correction and swimfit coaching – all levels
- › Open water swimming instruction and training
- › Swimming as therapy
- › Swimming-based tourism – domestic and international

Sharks – should we be worried about them as we venture into ocean swimming?

Despite my frequent jokes that sharks do not pose a problem for swimmers because I have never been taken by one is, of course and like all jokes, something of an exaggeration. Yes, we should be concerned (but not worried) because – of course – the ocean is where sharks live and their presence there is a sign of a healthy marine ecosystem. While it would be foolish of me to give an iron-clad guarantee that you will never be bothered by sharks so long as you take a few sensible precautions, your chances of mishap are extraordinarily low – much lower than driving a car. And, by taking into account a few precautions, you will see that open water swimming is just sooooo good.








First of all, some statistics. On average over the past 120 or so years, there has been one death from shark attack per year in Australia – and most of them have been in notorious high shark population areas and usually because swimmers had not taken adequate precautions. Check out this graph comparing deaths from rips and other natural events including shark deaths.



A few more statistics. As Australia's population has increased, so have shark encounters, but only about half of those encounters have resulted in injury (i.e. bites). And only 20 percent of those injuries have been fatal. In fact, the number of fatal shark attacks has fallen from an average of three a year in the 1930s to one a year since 2000.

So, what shark-related precautions should you take when swimming in the open sea?

- 🧐 Do not swim at dawn or dusk – that is when sharks feed
- 🧐 Do not swim in overcast conditions or in murky waters – sharks have poor eyesight and may mistake you for something more delectable (other animals swimming in the sea are more preferred shark prey than humans)
- 🧐 Do not swim in areas of known high shark concentrations – we often hear about incidents in some high concentration parts of NSW, South Australia and Western Australia for example

-  Do not swim near people fishing – they are trying to attract little fish which, in turn, attract big fish. Also fishers do not want you around to scare fish and you do not want to get snared on their hooks
-  If you are spear fishing, do not keep your catch on you, attached to a belt or anywhere else
-  If you are bleeding, or the fish you have speared is bleeding, get out of the water
-  Swim in company and stay together. Sharks tend to seek out the lone swimmer, or a straggler from a group
-  Sharks rarely venture into shallow water; so stay within a reasonable distance of the shore if possible
-  If at all possible, have someone in an accompanying boat, board or kayak, who is in an elevated position, to keep a watch out for you
-  Finally, we really should do our ocean swims at patrolled beaches and in between the flags. Lifesavers/lifeguards keep a watch out for sharks and will close the beach if necessary.

Now, taking on board those few points, keep in mind that shark attacks are rare and random events, so get out there and swim in nature.

Marine stingers – the curse of the open water swimmer

Summer is a time when a variety of marine stingers appear on the scene in our waterways. They are never much fun and can spoil an otherwise good day at the beach. The past couple of summers have been relatively free of stingers in our local open water swimming areas but there have already been sightings this season (and I have had one sting already!) of *Catostylus*, otherwise known as a 'blubber' or 'jelly'. Here is a brief description of what stingers we can expect to see in non-tropical southern Queensland ocean waters and what to do if you are stung.

Name	Description	Sting Symptoms	Treatment
Common Blubber (<i>Catostylus</i>)	Mushroom-shaped bell, 5-30cms in diameter. No tentacles but eight fronds hanging underneath	Minor skin irritation	Wash with sea water, not fresh water Apply cold packs for 10 minutes
Snotty (<i>Cyanea</i>) Also called Hair Jelly or Lion's Mane	Bigger than a blubber (up to 50cms diameter), with a less defined, often yellow-brown bell with a large mop of fine red-brown tentacles	Minor skin burning Multiple, raised white weals	Wash with sea water, not fresh water Apply cold packs for 10 minutes

Bluebottle (<i>Physalia</i> or Portuguese Man-o-War)	An air-filled bluish translucent sac up to 8cms long with a single blue tentacle up to one metre long	Pain and severe burning sensation Single raised white welt with prominent beading Occasionally difficulty in breathing	Remove tentacles In non-tropical waters, wash with sea water, not fresh water, do not rub Apply hot water - as hot as the patient can stand Apply cold packs for 10 minutes
Stonefish (these are normally tropical fish but they are also common in Moreton Bay)	20-30cms long, brown tough warty skin and often slimy with 13 spines on its back. Well camouflaged (looks like a rock)	Immediate severe localised pain when stood on Grey/blue discolouration of skin Sometimes an open wound Irrational behaviour and often panic	Place affected part in hot water (as hot as the patient can stand). This is usually the only treatment necessary Apply ice packs if required In severe cases, hospital admission may be necessary (antivenene is available)
Stingray	Large flat fish with whip-like barbed tail. They burrow under the sand and are usually difficult to detect until stood on	Intense pain and swelling Cut or penetrating wound Possible embedded barb	Place affected part in hot water (as hot as the patient can stand) Refer to a doctor or hospital as a tetanus injection and antibiotics may be required If the barb is embedded, it can only be removed surgically

The deadly box jelly fish and their cousins, the *Irukandji*, are normally found in summer and in tropical waters. However, with climate change, they are on their way south; but you are unlikely to see them in southern Queensland waters yet (if you do, douse with vinegar, call 000 and get to hospital) quickly.

Swimming technique myth #2: you need to pull past your hip

This long-held belief concerns extending the pull/push phase of the freestyle stroke back too far and makes little sense on closer evaluation. Many swimmers extend their arm so far back that it ends up being horizontal, with their palms facing the sky. This offers nothing in the way of forward propulsion and only serves to provide downwards pressure on the hips and legs and, at worst, can deliver an over-extension injury to the elbow and shoulder.




If you push back too far, your hand provides a very small surface area compared to the catch and the initial phase of the pull/push where not just the hand but also the forearm engages the water powered by the powerful back muscles. If you push back too far you engage the smaller tricep muscles making it a weak part of the stroke and you will be inclined to decelerate.

So how far should you push back? I often say to beginner swimmers and others, push back so that an outstretched thumb makes contact with your thigh, after which, you simply pull up the elbow to start the recovery phase. Hopefully this will be made easier with your body rotated. For

advanced swimmers, my advice is to touch your outstretched thumb against your hip or the upper part of your thigh. Of course, if you don't pull back far enough (i.e. shortening your stroke), you will not achieve the full propulsive benefit of the pull/push part of the freestyle stroke.

2019 European swimming-based holidays

Please let me know by **early December** if you are interested in any of the following August/September 2019 European swimming trips. I have some expressions of interest already but, as some of these expressions are a few months old now, please get in touch with me again if you are still interested. The planned trips are:

-  **Italy's Lake Orta** – likely dates are late August/early September (after this, the lake is too cold)
-  **Lake Constance/Bodensee: A Three Country European Cycling and Swimming Odyssey** (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) – likely dates early/mid September
-  **Greek Islands Swimming Adventure: Rhodes and Symi**: likely dates mid/late September (before this the Med is too hot!)

For information on each trip, please go to the website <http://www.otteraquatics.com.au/swim-tours.html>. There are links there to all three trips with information relevant for 2018. Details for 2019 trips will be similar but prices will likely do as prices do – increase a little.

Importantly, the trips will only go ahead if each trip has at least six participants.

As soon as I receive your expressions of interest, I will issue invoices for deposits which must be received by 31st December 2018 in order for me to make bookings. Balances will be due by the end of May 2019.

The cost of getting to and from Europe is up to you, as is the cost of getting from one trip to another, assuming you want to do more than one. Each trip has its own price structure: all include accommodation, breakfasts and local transport and some, but not all, have lunches included.






I will be able to be more definite about which trips will go ahead and their dates when I have collated responses from you.

Exercise: the key to good heart health

The following is the gist of an address I gave to a Heart Support Australia (HSA) conference in Canberra on 5 October.

How do we look after our heart to lessen the chance of heart attack? Or how do we look after our heart if we have already had a heart attack? The answer is exercise.

Exercise is the single most important factor in the prevention of premature death from heart disease. The other main contributory factors – all of which are important – are:

-  Smoking
-  Poor diet
-  Excessive alcohol consumption
-  History of severe coronary disease
-  Not taking prescribed medications.

Exercise is not just advisable – it is essential! It improves the functioning of the heart – and the lungs. And this is for all men and women, regardless of age.

How much exercise is necessary? The simple answer is the more the better, within reason, but the marginal increase in cardio vascular fitness achieved through exercise reduces with intensity. What does that mean? With every bit and type of exercise, there is benefit; and the benefit is greater with more exercise but the reduced coronary risk of someone who does, say, energetic aerobics or jogging for an hour or more every day is not that much more than someone who takes an hour's brisk walk once a week. More explanation: do as much exercise as you can but, if you miss a session of two, don't think it is pointless to get back into it.

What about other diseases? There are no parts of our lives that are not enhanced in some way or other by exercise. Indeed, exercise is beneficial in the treatment for all types of life-threatening disease. For example, Australian cancer experts have recently launched a world-first position statement calling for exercise to be prescribed to all cancer patients as part of their routine treatment, including during chemotherapy. It is also well-known that exercise is an excellent prescription in the treatment of Type 2 Diabetes, Depression, PTSD, Stroke and Metabolic Syndrome. And we know that all these diseases are interlinked.

What type of exercise is best? The short answer is the one (or ones) that you like and that you are therefore most likely to continue doing on a regular basis. But they have to increase the heart rate. Don't think that just sitting in the water somehow magically delivers greater fitness. Increasing the heart rate pumps oxygenated blood around the body, including to the brain, faster and more efficiently and it keeps our heart and blood vessels in good health.

Walking is good, as is swimming, aquarobics and a host of other forms of exercise. And most can be done at all stages of life. If you haven't exercised for a while, start out slowly and gradually increase the intensity as your fitness improves.

How do I motivate myself to exercise? The best way is to exercise with a friend or in a group. And set a day and time with others so that you are less likely to pull out.

Where should I exercise? It is best to exercise outdoors in order to gain the best mental health outcomes of exercise. Do it with a view of the water if you can.

Quiz of the month

Last month's quiz question was: 'is a rip a current or a tide'? The answer is 'a current'. A current is a horizontal movement of water whereas a tide is a vertical movement of water. Thank you for the prize.

This month's question is: 'what is the common name of the marine stinger *Physalia*? And, for a supplementary question: 'how should we treat a sting from a *Physalia*'?

Quote of the month

'The challenge for adults is to retain the seriousness of the child at play'

Pic of the month



Breaking down 'the Tyranny of the Wall' – or just 'Breaking down the Wall'.

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As scintillating as this newsletter no doubt is to everyone, I have no wish to clog up people's inboxes if they have lost interest. If this is the case, please reply to this email with the word UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line or body and I will unsubscribe you.

