

Common Beach Hazards Guide

What every Age Manager should know to help keep kids safe on the sand and in the surf

You don't need to be a lifesaving expert to manage your Nippers group safely—but having a basic awareness of common beach hazards helps you stay alert, respond calmly, and support the patrol team when needed. This guide gives you a quick overview of what to look out for and how to handle it.

1. Know Your Role

- You're not expected to be the first responder—patrol teams and First Aid Officers take the lead in emergencies.
- Your role is **prevention**: keep an eye on your group, follow instructions from patrol, and report any concerns early.

2. Key Hazards to Watch For

- **Rips and Currents**
 - Look for deeper, darker water, fewer breaking waves, or sandbanks on either side.
 - Always keep activities between the red and yellow flags unless otherwise advised.
 - If you're unsure, ask a patrolling Lifesaver before entering the water.
- **Marine Creatures**
 - Stingers (jellyfish), sea lice, blue bottles, or even crabs can disrupt a session.
 - If any are spotted, notify the patrol and calmly move your group out of the water.
 - Encourage kids not to pick up or touch anything unfamiliar.
- **Sun and Heat**
 - Sunburn, dehydration, and heat exhaustion are common risks.
 - Ensure all children wear hats, shirts, and sunscreen, and bring water bottles.
 - Build in shaded breaks where possible.
- **Surf Conditions**
 - Dumping waves or strong shore breaks can surprise younger kids.
 - If conditions change or seem unsafe, shift to sand-based activities and notify patrol.
- **Sharp Objects or Debris**
 - Glass, shells, sticks, or even beach toys can cause trips or cuts.
 - Do a quick scan of your activity area before starting, especially in dry sand zones.
- **Equipment Risks**
 - Boards, rescue tubes, and other gear can cause injury if misused or left unattended.
 - Set clear ground rules before using any equipment.

3. Tips for Safe Supervision

- Always **position yourself to see the whole group**. Use assistant helpers or parents to spread supervision.
- Use a buddy system in the water to keep pairs accountable.
- Maintain regular **head counts**, especially during transitions or after water activities.
- Know your nearest **first aid point** and patrol contact.

4. What to Do if Something Happens

- Stay calm and call for help.
- Keep your group away from the incident and continue supervising others.
- Report any hazard, injury, or concern to your JAC and record if required.

Final Thought: When in Doubt, Ask

You're not alone out there. If something doesn't feel right—check in with the patrol. Being proactive helps keep your group safe and models great beach awareness for your Nippers.

