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Volume XIV, Number 7

July 2006

Avoid Swimming With the Sharks

Swimming at ocean beaches is generally safe. Though an encounter with a shark is unlikely, it's wise to know how to decrease your chances of being mistaken for a shark's next dinner.

Shark behaviorist Rocky Strong, Ph.D., who works with the Discovery Channel and *National Geographic*, offers the following advice:

- ◆ Avoid swimming by yourself. Sharks are far less likely to attack a group.
- ◆ Swim where the water is clear. In murky water, you could be mistaken for a large fish.
- ◆ Stay out of the water at feeding times. Dawn and dusk are the most common hunting hours for sharks.
- ◆ Don't splash around. Strong says splashing can sound like struggling prey.
- ◆ Leave your jewelry on shore. Sharks can mistake jewelry for shiny fish scales.
- ◆ Never swim in the ocean when you have an open wound. A shark can detect the presence of blood in the water. If you have a cut or scratch, stay out of the water if you're not sure whether or not there are sharks in the area.

Take the Plunge into Water Safety

During the summer, many people enjoy swimming in oceans, pools, lakes, rivers, or water parks. In addition to swimming, they also enjoy sailboarding, windsurfing, jet skiing, boating, skiing, scuba diving, snorkeling, tubing, rafting, and other water-related activities. But before you embark on a water-related activity, it's important to review basic water safety tips. Here are a few to help make your water experience safe and enjoyable:

- Learn to swim. Enroll in a swimming class. Classes are offered for people of all ages.
- Swim with a buddy whenever possible and try to always swim in areas supervised by a lifeguard.
- Obey posted rules and warning signs.
- Pay attention to local weather reports. Stop swimming at the first sign of bad weather.
- Don't drink alcohol and swim. Alcohol plays a role in many drownings because it leads to risk taking.
- Beware of bacteria and parasites in swimming pools that can cause ear infections and more serious diseases. Don't swallow water while swimming.
- Cover any open wounds with waterproof bandages before kids go in the water, and ask when the chlorine level of a pool was last checked.
- Use sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, and avoid sun exposure between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.



- Never swim in drainage ditches and arroyos.
- Wear Coast Guard approved life jackets when around water (especially children and inexperienced swimmers).
- Watch where you're swimming. Check the area for holes, rocks, coral, and debris. Never dive head first into unknown waters. Use the feet-first entry.
- Handle riptides. Eighty percent of beach lifeguard rescues involve swimmers caught in rip currents. If you're caught in a riptide, swim parallel to the shore to get out of it.
- Take lessons on how to use a jet ski, sailboard, or other water sport equipment. Sign up to go with a group led by a qualified instructor when snorkeling, scuba diving, or rafting.
- When using any watercraft, use extreme caution around swimmers and surfers.
- Learn how to perform CPR in case an emergency situation occurs.

For more tips on water safety, visit the American Red Cross at www.redcross.org. In Canada, visit the Canadian Red Cross at www.redcross.ca.