

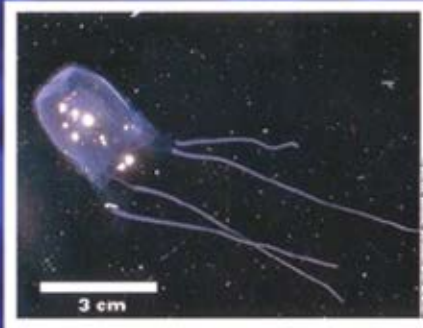
Irukandji: Fact & Fiction



Carukia barnesi, the "common Irukandji"



Irukandji stings occur around the world; Australia leads in pro-active awareness and risk management



Malo maxima, a newly discovered Irukandji

Whitsundays Stinger Safety

Wear protective clothing

- A full-length lycra suit reduces the risk of stings by 75%; great sun protection too!

Carry vinegar

- When you go swimming, boating, cast-netting; some beaches provide vinegar

Don't swim alone

- Make sure someone knows where you are and when you expect to be home

Have access to help

- Carry mobile phone or VHF radio

If in doubt, treat it as Irukandji

- Saturate stings with vinegar, even minor stings; if vinegar is unavailable, acidic products (e.g., coca cola) may be used but are less effective in killing stinging cells

Don't go back in the water until you're sure you are not ill (wait 30 minutes)

If in doubt or in distress, seek help ASAP

Myths & Facts

FALSE

- You can't get stung at the reef or islands
- Summer is the only risk time for jellyfish stings
- I'm in good health, it won't affect me
- Irukandjis were never here when I grew up; I think this stinger risk stuff is all just a bunch of media hype
- Irukandjis breed in the rivers and estuaries, and therefore they are mostly found close to shore
- I don't use vinegar anymore, it doesn't stop the pain
- I've got lots of body hair, so it will protect me

TRUE

- Different species of Irukandjis occur onshore and offshore
- Stings have been reported all months of the year
- Irukandji syndrome affects all people who are stung
- Accurate medical records since 1943 indicate that Irukandjis have been around a long time
- We do not know where Irukandjis breed, but it does not appear that they breed in the rivers
- Vinegar kills invisible stinging cells, stopping more sting
- Hairy people and animals still get stung

What are the chances?

Three people are known to have died from Irukandji over the past 100 years worldwide. While the true number is likely to have been somewhat higher, compare this with other routine and recreational hazards:

- Over 300 people are killed each year by road accidents in Queensland alone
- Approximately 292 people drown in their cars in the US each year
- Killed by swans worldwide : 2
- Fatal snake bites in Australia per year: 1
- Australian lightning deaths 1980-1990: 19
- Children drowning in UK garden ponds: 8/yr
- Number of people killed at Disneyland: 9
- Skiing fatalities per year in USA: 34
- American food allergy deaths: 150-200/year
- Killed by electrical current in USA: 850/yr
- Killed by accidental gunfire in USA: 1452/yr
- Killed by food poisoning in USA: 5000/yr
- Killed by captive elephants since 1963: 17
- 6 in 1000 heart patients dies during sex