

Know Your Beach

7. SPINAL INJURY AWARENESS

Each year many people visiting our beaches will risk serious spinal injury, often through not thinking of the consequences of their actions for just a brief moment.



FIRST AID

In the event of a suspected spinal injury, the correct first aid treatment is to:

- Firstly remove the patients face from the water and try to stabilise the neck.
- Assess the patients breathing as this must take priority.
- Unless wave or water conditions dictate otherwise, if the patient is breathing the rescue can then proceed unhurried with every effort made to minimise movement of the spine.
- Seek trained rescue support and medical aid as soon as possible. Any neck soreness or pain should be treated as a potential spinal injury until properly assessed.

SPINAL INJURIES

- Swim only in patrolled areas and always check the depth of water before diving. If unsure of the depth, always enter the water feet first. If in doubt, check with the lifesaver or lifeguard on duty as to conditions at your local beach.
- In the surf, being dumped by a wave on a shallow sandbank is a major cause of cervical (neck) spine injury. Running and diving into the surf and striking a sandbank are other causes of such injuries. Diving from piers, walls and jetties or natural features such as rock ledges and cliffs have also lead to injury.
- In still water, most cervical spine injuries are due to diving into unexpectedly shallow water or because of unseen obstacles in pools, rivers, creeks and dams.