

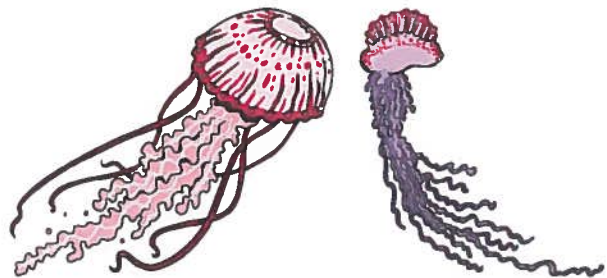
Longfellow's Aquatic Life Facts

Weeds

Weeds, grass and kelp are usually not a problem for swimmers. However, an inexperienced swimmer who swims into a patch of weeds could become entangled. If the swimmer then tries to get free by moving wildly, the weeds could wrap securely around the arms and legs. Gentle shaking and pulling arms and legs out slowly will clear the weeds.

Jellyfish and Portuguese Man-of-War

Jellyfish or Portuguese man-of-war stings can be painful, and they can make a person feel sick. The side effects of a sting can include allergic reactions that can cause breathing or heart problems. Swimmers should avoid these creatures in the water and on the beach.



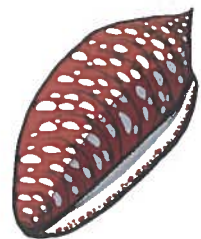
Coral

Coral can cause multiple cuts. These cuts require thorough cleaning and possibly medical attention. Avoid swimming in areas where coral may cause a problem.



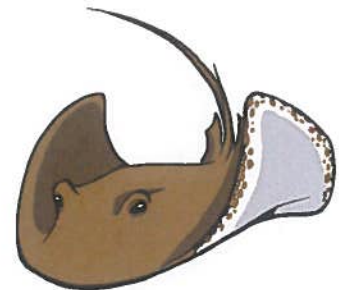
Cone Shells

The cone shell is related to the snail. It can puncture the skin and inject venom (poison) through the cut. Cone shell poisoning can cause numbness and tingling around the nose and mouth, paralysis and even death. Wounds from cone shells need immediate medical attention. Swimmers should avoid picking these shells up from the bottom of the ocean.



Stingray

Stingrays do not normally attack people but will sting if they are accidentally stepped on. Stingrays have a stinger at the base of the tail that has venom (poison). If a person steps on the stinger, they will get a cut or puncture wound that can be very painful. The venom can cause faintness, weakness, sweating, vomiting, diarrhea or muscle cramps. Wounds from stingrays need medical attention. When entering the ocean, swimmers should shuffle their feet. This will cause stingrays to swim out of the area.



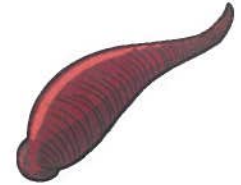
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Longfellow's Aquatic Life Facts

Leeches

Leeches are more of a nuisance than a danger. Leeches are found in freshwater areas, especially in murky (dark) or muddy water.



Sharks, Barracuda, Moray Eels

Being bitten by a shark, barracuda or moray eel can cause serious injury. The best protection is to swim in a supervised area where someone is on the lookout for dangerous aquatic animals.

Snakes

Snakes normally avoid people. Swimmers should not try to corner or chase a snake, and they should always check carefully for snakes under a boat before moving it or turning it over.

Sea Urchins

Sea urchins, found in the ocean, are covered with sharp brittle spines (points). If handled or stepped on, the spines can puncture a person's hand or foot and can be quite painful. Some sea urchins are poisonous. Swimmers should not pick up sea urchins and should be careful not to step on them.

What to Do If You Encounter an Aquatic Animal

If you come across an aquatic animal in or out of the water and you suspect it could be harmful, you should:

- Leave it alone. Do not touch it.
- Move away slowly.
- Note its exact location and tell the lifeguard or an adult.

How to Prevent Stings and Bites

Your best protection against stings and bites is to learn about aquatic animals and their habitats. If you can recognize the dangerous ones and you know where they live, you will know what to stay away from.

If you are bitten or stung by an aquatic animal, call for help immediately.