



Lifeguards

ON THE BEACH

Your guide to a safe and fun time at the seaside

Photo: RNLI/Nigel Millard



The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea

OUR AIM AT THE RNLI IS TO ALWAYS PUT LIFE FIRST

Our lifeguard and lifeboat crews will be looking out for your safety while you enjoy a well-deserved break at the beach.

Whether you're here to swim, sunbathe, explore rockpools or build sandcastles, we want you to have the best time possible. So read through our safety tips for avoiding mishaps and accidents. Along the way, you'll hear some real life rescue stories and learn a bit more about our lifesaving service. Plus, there's lots inside for younger readers - Enjoy!

Actress Caroline Quentin always looks for a lifeguarded beach when enjoying time with her family at the seaside:

'As a mother to two children, I always consider safety when visiting a beach.

'Having RNLI lifeguards nearby is reassuring. We can get on with our fun, knowing they are on hand just in case we need to ask for advice, help with first aid or even missing children.

'And should there be a real emergency, you know that with their professional training, fitness and above all courage, they will be there for you.

'I would urge people to take a moment to read this invaluable guide from the RNLI.'



In this guide you will see two types of warning symbol:

This is a hazard to watch out for – take care!



This is a prohibition sign – don't do it!



WHICH BEACH?

Do you have a favourite beach or are you looking for somewhere new? How do you choose? Most people consider the:

- ★ ease of transport/parking
- ★ toilets
- ★ sand or stones
- ★ cleanliness
- ★ access to fresh water/showers
- ★ refreshment facilities
- ★ attractions nearby.

The seaside isn't most people's usual environment so it's easy to miss some of its hazards. Try to plan for the following points too before you set out and look for the safety signs when you get to your beach.

LIFEGUARDED

- ★ Most of all, try to choose a lifeguarded beach.

A list of RNLI lifeguarded beaches is also available at RNLI.org/beach.

DON'T FORGET TO READ THE SAFETY SIGNS



HAZARDS ON THE BEACH

- ★ high and low tides – will the beach be there?
- ★ sharp objects/litter hidden in the sand
- ★ slippery rocks/big drops from cliffs and harbour walls
- ★ unstable cliffs – stay away from cliffs at all times.

AND IN THE WATER

- ★ rip currents/dumping waves – they could drag you out of your depth
- ★ jellyfish and weeverfish, which can sting
- ★ offshore winds – don't get blown out to sea
- ★ man made structures like piers and groynes
- ★ other water users – swimmers don't mix well with powerboats!

TRUE STORY

Sally Cole and her sons Jack (15) and Toby (12) will never forget their holiday in August ...

'We were enjoying a family holiday with friends at Mawgan Porth. The beach was busy and the water was heaving. We were swimming and bodyboarding between the flags when we were suddenly caught in a rip current.

'One minute the water was at waist level, the next my feet couldn't find the bottom. My son Jack just shot straight out to sea, along with our friend Colin, his son and some others. Colin and I are both strong swimmers and I used to be a pool lifeguard so it was such a shock that I was out of my depth so quickly. I was being pulled under and out, and was really fighting large waves every time I came up.

'We were really glad to see the lifeguards who brought Jack in, along with our other friends, and checked I was okay on the way through. Luckily, my other son Toby had paddled out to me and two other ladies so we could grab onto his bodyboard until the lifeguards could come back for us. He was remarkably calm considering! All in all I reckon the lifeguards must have picked up 11 people during that rescue. We were all incredibly grateful.

'If I could give a piece of advice to others it would be that you absolutely need to be swimming on a lifeguarded beach, especially if there is a large group of you with teenagers. Most importantly – don't panic!

RIP CURRENTS



Rips are strong currents that can quickly take swimmers from the shallows out beyond their depth.

Lifeguards will show you where you can avoid rips but if you do get caught in one:

- ★ stay calm – don't panic
- ★ if you can stand, wade don't swim
- ★ keep hold of your board or inflatable to help you float
- ★ raise your hand and shout for help
- ★ never try to swim directly against the rip or you'll get exhausted
- ★ swim parallel to the beach until free of the rip, then make for shore
- ★ if you see anyone else in trouble, alert the lifeguards or call **999** or **112** and ask for the Coastguard.



Sally Cole and family with the lifeguards at Mawgan Porth
Photo: Lewis Timson

BE PREPARED

Once you've checked your route, don't forget you might have quite a trek to the beach itself, even if you're travelling by car, so don't overdo the packing!

You may find a checklist is helpful to ensure you don't forget the obvious: food, drink, sun cream ...

FOOD

While you'll probably take cold food with you or buy refreshments on site, you may fancy cooking instead. Some beaches have clearly marked barbeque areas set aside for this. If you are unsure whether you can light a barbeque where you are, then it's best that you don't. Remember that a disposable barbeque stays very hot for a long time, so don't bury it for someone else to burn their feet on.

The Marine Conservation Society reports that litter levels have nearly doubled in 18 years. Please help to do something about it and always dispose of your rubbish in the bin or take it home so the beach remains clean and the wildlife doesn't get injured. If you want to do something about the problem, join in with a beach clean at mcsuk.org.



DRINKS

Fluid is vital. Cooler weather can mean a flask of tea or soup, but on any day make sure there is plenty of water for everyone, as the wind and sun can easily dehydrate you even when it isn't very hot.

Alcohol is a poor idea at the beach. It affects judgement, leading to greater risk-taking behaviour. It's not advisable to enter the water when you've been drinking, especially in the evening when lifeguards are no longer patrolling.

Alcohol also contributes to dehydration, increasing the danger of heat stroke. Be moderate or, better still, leave this kind of partying until after you've left the beach.



SUN SAFETY



Sunburn can ruin your holiday and increase the risk of skin cancer in later life. According to our friends at the Karen Clifford Skin Cancer Charity, Skcin, we experience over half our lifetime's exposure to the sun before we reach the age of 21.

Remember the five Ss of sun safety::

- ★ **Sunscreen** – slon on a minimum of SPF 30+ broad-spectrum, 4 star+ rated, waterproof sunscreen. Follow the manufacturer's guidelines on the bottle for frequency of application. Waterproof sunscreens should not be used on children under 3 years as it can stop them sweating and lead to overheating
- ★ **Sun hat** – slap on a broad-brimmed hat that shades your face, neck and ears
- ★ **Sunglasses** – wear wrap-around sunglasses with UV protection to shield your eyes
- ★ **Shoulders** – slip on a T-shirt or UV protective suit for children and remember to keep your shoulders covered
- ★ **Shade** – seek shade, particularly during the hottest time of the day between 11am and 3pm when UV penetration is at its strongest.

For more info on sun safety visit skcin.org



FAMILY FUN



The RNLI has teamed up with the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) to help keep our beaches safe and clean for people and wildlife. MCS recommends you visit goodbeachguide.co.uk to discover Britain's best beaches and avoid swimming in dirty water.

When you've arrived at your chosen beach, exploring the seashore is fantastic fun for all the family. You can find a new world of wildlife in shallow pools among boulders and sands.

While most creatures are harmless, weeverfish, jellyfish and sea anemones are common finds that will cause a painful injury, so please remember to **look and not touch**.

To keep yourself and beach wildlife safe, MCS says:

- ★ leave animals where you find them
- ★ carefully lift and replace any rocks you may have removed – there are animals underneath that need them for shelter
- ★ leave attached seaweed in place – there is plenty lying loose on the shoreline
- ★ do not trample through the rock pools
- ★ play away from cliffs.

ENVIRONMENT

Our coast is spectacularly beautiful, rich in wildlife and hugely popular, drawing people from a considerable distance for a range of recreational activities. Many sites are protected for their special wildlife interest and include a variety of rare and protected species from marine mammals to plants, birds and insects.

Depending on where you are in the UK, take a look at these websites to find out if the beach you're visiting is in a protected site and what habitats and species you might find:

- ★ Natural England naturalengland.org.uk
- ★ Countryside Council for Wales ccw.gov.uk
- ★ Northern Ireland Environment Agency doeni.gov.uk/niea
- ★ Scottish Natural Heritage snh.gov.uk
- ★ National Trust nationaltrust.org.uk

NATURAL ENGLAND



NIEA Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Scottish Natural Heritage
Dùlchas Nàdair na h-Alba
All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fèid airson Alba air fèid



TREATING A STING

WEEVERFISH

These are plain-looking fish that sometimes nestle in the sand, in water just a few centimetres deep. A weeverfish will raise a sharp spine on its back in self defence if trodden on – ouch! Place the affected area in water as hot as you can stand. Test the water first so as not to scald the person who has been stung.



JELLYFISH

If you are stung by a jellyfish, do not rub as this will cause the pain to increase. Lightly spray the area with sea water and apply a cold compress if available. **If severe and or life threatening symptoms are present, seek medical attention immediately.** If you spot a jellyfish, do not touch it and report it to the lifeguard or to the MCS at mcsuk.org.



SEA ANEMONES

You can find sea anemones stuck on rocks. These are soft-bodied creatures that can produce a nasty rash if brushed against – though most people won't be affected.



Photo: Paul Naylor



Photo: RNLI/Nigel Millard

MISSING CHILDREN



Children are safest when supervised.

As soon as you get to the beach, agree a meeting point in case of separation. If the beach runs a children's safety scheme, using wristbands or tickets, take part. They're free and they work.

If you are on an RNLI lifeguarded beach, pay a visit to the lifeguard hut on arrival and they will be able to tell you if there is a scheme running on that beach.

If a child does go missing:

- ★ calmly check your surroundings first, ensuring other children remain monitored
- ★ contact the lifeguards or police and keep them informed
- ★ let all searchers know once the child is found.

INFLATABLES



Blow-up toys and airbeds are designed for pools, not the sea where they can easily be blown out to sea.

If you must use them at the beach, then:

- ★ ensure children are closely supervised
- ★ keep nearby
- ★ only use between the red and yellow flags
- ★ follow the lifeguard's advice
- ★ do not take out in big waves
- ★ do not use when orange windsock is flying, as this indicates offshore winds.



HERE ARE SOME FUN, FREE GAMES THAT CAN BE PLAYED AT THE BEACH:

FLAGS GAME

This game is used by lifesaving clubs with small children, but is also an international competitive lifesaving sport and is used as part of lifeguard fitness training.

The 'flags' are sticks (blunt!) with something tied to the top, or proper sandcastle flags, poked into the sand. Lie on the sand, face down and heads away from the flags. At a given signal, leap up and run to grab a flag. Make sure there are always one or two fewer flags than people playing, so the slowest are eliminated, just as in musical chairs. This goes on until only one person remains.

SCAVENGER HUNT

Choose a theme to make your collection more exciting. Focus on natural objects or man-made ones but keep away from the sharp and spiky. Try finding something on the beach beginning with each letter of the alphabet. Or make a collection of particular colours – you could build a rainbow with your finds!

If you've collected litter – thank you! Otherwise, make sure you leave your finds on the beach at the end of the day as they are part of the natural environment.

BEACH OLYMPICS

Wet sand makes a great Olympic arena! Draw some lines in the sand to mark out your own tracks, courts and pitches. As well as all the athletic events – running, jumping, throwing – how about inventing some variations of your own?

HUMAN OBSTACLE COURSE

Each person becomes an obstacle for the rest of the family to climb over or jump across. When you've completed your go, form a new obstacle, and the line continues. The 'obstacles' can give the 'racers' instructions on how the obstacle is to be negotiated.

BLANKET VOLLEYBALL

You'll need a beach ball or football and picnic rug for this one. Everyone holds the edges of the blanket with the ball in the middle. You have to work together to move the ball – see how high or how far you can throw it only using the blanket.

KNOW YOUR FLAGS



RED AND YELLOW FLAGS

Lifeguarded area: safest place to swim, bodyboard and use inflatables.



BLACK AND WHITE CHEQUERED FLAGS

For surfboards, kayaks and other non-powered craft. Never swim or bodyboard here.



ORANGE WINDSOCK

Indicates offshore or strong wind conditions – never use an inflatable when the sock is flying.



RED FLAG

Danger! *Never* go in the water when the red flag is up, under any circumstances.



If you see anyone else in trouble, alert the lifeguards or call 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard.

TRUE STORY



Lifeguard Justin White has seen the danger of using inflatables at the beach.

'It was a busy, sunny afternoon on Weymouth's main beach and there were lots of people out on inflatable toys. It was difficult to keep tabs on all of the inflatables but we spotted one that had been blown 60m offshore with two young children in it. Most of our work is preventative but when you see something like this it's like someone flicking a switch in you – you react immediately.

'We launched the inshore rescue boat, while lifeguards on the beach radioed through that one of the boys had panicked and jumped out into the water. He couldn't swim and was clearly out of his depth. I could see his head bobbing in and out of the water. We had to pick our way through the busy waters to get to him. We got him aboard and set back to shore, promising the other boy we would be back soon. Once we had handed our casualty over to our colleagues on the beach we returned at once for the other boy and the inflatable.

'Both lads were checked over and reassured until we reunited them with their parents – who were completely unaware of what had happened!

'Inflatables are very popular – many shops sell them but holidaymakers don't appreciate the dangers. Inflatables are best left for the swimming pool, but if you do use them, stay between the red and yellow flags and never go out in strong winds, especially offshore conditions.'



TELL US YOURS ...

Have *you* been involved in a rescue carried out by RNLI lifeboats or lifeguards? Did you witness them do something amazing? Or can you tell us of an incident at a beach that was *not* lifeguarded? Let us know!

Email us your story, with any photos, to coastal_safety@RNLI.org.uk

SWIMMING, SURFING AND BODYBOARDING

Surfing GB is the national governing body for surfing and bodyboarding. For further information, accredited training centres and recognised schools visit surfinggb.com or contact **07711 263584**.



STAYING SAFE

Do:

- ★ follow the advice of the lifeguards
- ★ wear your leash so you don't lose your board
- ★ check your equipment for damage before use
- ★ bodyboard between the red and yellow flags
- ★ surf between the black and white flags
- ★ consider other water users – learn surf etiquette and rights of way.

Don't:

- ★ ditch your board – it will keep you afloat in an emergency and make you easier to find
- ★ go alone
- ★ go in if the conditions are above your capability.



If you get into difficulties, stick up your hand and shout for help – but never abandon your board



TIDES



A beach can seem like a vast playground, but the tide can come in surprisingly quickly. Many lifeboat and lifeguard rescues are to people getting cut off by the rising water. To prevent this happening to you, get local tidal information from the Harbour Master or the Tourist Information Centre.

Always keep a look out for the direction of the tide while on the beach. Just be aware ... and if in doubt, move out!



TOMBSTONING



Jumping from heights into water is **dangerous** because:

- ★ water depth alters with the tide – it might be shallower than you think
- ★ submerged objects like rocks may not be visible
- ★ it can be really cold and the shock makes it difficult to swim
- ★ there can be strong currents that might sweep you away.

Many people have been seriously hurt or even killed due to tombstoning. Our advice is **not** to do it at all.

AT HOME

Perhaps it's a bit rainy today and you can't make it to the beach. Don't worry – here are a couple of seaside puzzles to keep you busy.

QUIZ

1. How many crew are there usually in a lifeguard's inshore rescue boat?
 2. What is a 'mermaid's purse'?
 3. Which is the biggest ocean?
 4. What does 'submerge' mean?
 5. What does the red flag mean at a beach?
 6. What do you call a collection of jellyfish?
 7. What is a neap tide?
 8. What does an orange sock on the beach mean?
 9. What is bladder wrack?
 10. What colours are the RNLI lifeguards' uniforms?
- (See the bottom of the page for the answers.)

SHORETHING!



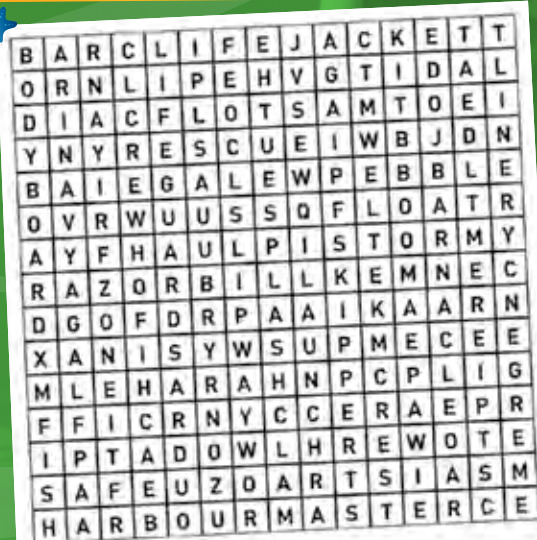
You might also like to have a look at our website designed especially for children, Shorething! It's full of amazing games and downloads. See RNLI.org/shorething.

Why not take this leaflet back to school? Your teacher can find lots of ideas for your lessons and even book an RNLI visit at RNLI.org/education

1. Two, the driver and one other crew person.
2. An egg case of a type of fish related to sharks.
3. The Pacific.
4. To go under water.
5. Danger – do not enter the water.
6. A 'smack' of jellyfish.
7. When the difference between high and low tides is smallest.
8. Offshore wind conditions. Never use an inflatable when the orange windsack is flying.
9. A type of seaweed.
10. Red and yellow.

WORDSEARCH

The hidden words in the wordsearch are all to do with the sea or the work of the RNLI. You can find the words forwards or backwards, up or down, or diagonally.



Finding up to 25 is so-so, 25-35 good, 35-45 clever, 45-55 genius!

BODYBOARD
LIFEJACKET
RNLI
FLOTSAM
CREW
LIFEGUARD
RESCUE
GALE
PEBBLE
FLOAT
STORMY
RAZORBILL
ZONE
BARNACLE
SPLASH
LAUNCH
SKIPPER
BOOM
LIFEBOAT

SLIPWAY
RIP
SEA
ICY
YACHT
GULL
WIND
KIT
BUOY
BEACH
HELM
WAVE
SURF
FLAG
LIMPET
SWIM
SAND
HARBOURMASTER
MOOR

REEL
FISH
HAUL
KEEP
CLAM
EMERGENCY
EEL
SAFE
SHIP
TIDAL
NAVY
TOWER
ROW
LINER
OAR
CREST
PIER



The RNLI also has several impressive museums and over 235 lifeboat stations around the UK and Republic of Ireland – see our website RNLI.org or call 0845 122 6999 to find out which ones you can visit near you.



THE RNLI



The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea. Every day of every year, people of all backgrounds get into danger in the water. It's a problem we're here to help with. We're here to explain the risks, share safety knowledge and rescue people whose lives are in danger. We're here to work with others to make the water a safer place for everyone.

KEEPING YOU SAFE

Since the RNLI was formed in 1824, our lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 141,000 lives.

We operate over 235 lifeboat stations in the UK and Republic of Ireland. These provide a 24-hour search and rescue service along 19,000 miles of coastline and 100 nautical miles out to sea all year round. In 2015 RNLI lifeboat crews rescued 7,973 people.

Our lifeguards work with lifeboat crews to provide a seamless rescue service from the beach to the open sea. Our lifeguards were present at 225 lifeguard units in 2015 in the UK and Channel Islands and, on average, they respond to over 15,000 incidents every year.

In 2015 alone, lifeboat crew and lifeguards saved 378 lives.

When someone is drowning in the surf *seconds* count, so we need expert lifesavers on the beach ready to act. As much as 95% of our lifeguards' work is preventative – they look out for potential problems before they develop into something worse, and give helpful safety advice and information to beach goers. In 2015 our lifeguards carried out 2.31M preventative actions.

FUNDED BY YOU

The RNLI aims to continue expanding its lifeguard service around the coast. As a charity, the RNLI relies on voluntary financial support including gifts in Wills, which help fund 6 out of 10 lifeboat launches.

With more people using our beaches and seas, the demand on our services is greater than ever and our running costs for 2015 were £168.1m, that's around £460,000 per day.

Whether it's volunteering your time, raising money, remembering us in your Will or buying a souvenir from one of our shops, the RNLI relies on your generous support to save lives at sea. We can't do it without you.

Phone 0300 300 9990 or go to RNLI.org to donate now and help save lives at sea. Thank you.

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE STAY SAFE

A range of free resources, lesson plans and practical advice is available for children of all ages, to promote water and beach safety and to support primary and secondary school teachers and youth leaders at:

RNLI.org/safetyandeducation.

ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY ACTS

Volunteers are the heart of the RNLI. Thousands of people, including our lifeboat crew members, give their time, skill and commitment to help save lives at sea.

We are also thankful to the thousands of fundraisers who help raise funds to train and equip our crews and lifeguards. Their support turns ordinary people into lifesavers. They all help the RNLI save lives at sea.



If you see someone in difficulty, never attempt a rescue. Tell a lifeguard or, if you can't see a lifeguard, call **999** or **112** and ask for the Coastguard.



Company/Club stamp

Royal National Lifeboat Institution
West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ
Tel: 0300 300 9990
Email: coastal_safety@RNLI.org.uk
Web: RNLI.org/safety

The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea
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