

Facts about marine stingers around Port Douglas

In the stinger season between November and June dangerous marine stingers inhabit this area.

What do they look like? There are many jellyfish that can give you a very painful sting, but there are **only two** in Australian waters that can kill you. These are the **box jellyfish** and the **irukandji**. The box jellyfish is a large, almost transparent jellyfish with a box-shaped body and many ribbon-like tentacles (up to 15 from each corner) that grows up to 3 metres in length. In contrast, the irukandji is very small (only 1-2 centimetres in diameter) with only four tentacles (one from each corner of it's body). It can hardly be seen and hence is very dangerous.

Box jellyfish



Irukandji



Where do they live? Dangerous marine stingers mostly live in tropical waters north of Agnes Water Queensland, all Northern Territory waters and in Western Australia, south to Exmouth. Sometimes they can be found further south in Moreton Bay, Fraser Island, Sydney and Melbourne, which most people are unaware of and take less or no precautions. Box jelly fish tend to be found near beaches and the coast, whereas irukjandji can be found anywhere in the water.

Why are they dangerous? Their tentacles are covered with stinging cells which release deadly venom. The box jellyfish is widely regarded as the world's most venomous animal because it can kill an adult human in under 3 minutes. You might not notice an irukandji sting at first, but over time it will make you very sick which can lead to death.

Are the stingers a problem? Not really, if you take precautions. Luckily there have been not many fatal incidents with jellyfish as people are increasingly aware of them and take adequate precautions. Since 1883 there have been 70 fatalities, most of them in past times where not much was known about stingers and their habitat. The last reported fatality was in 2006 in Bamaga and there there has only ever been one fatality in Port Douglas.

How to avoid them? Always swim between the red and yellow flags. Look for and obey safety signs. Do not enter the water when beaches are closed. Swim in **stinger nets** and wear **full-body lycra body suits, possibly with hood and gloves**. When you go out on a boat for a snorkel tour or diving you will be given appropriate suits to protect yourself.

What to do if you get hurt: Call 000 immediately, provide CPR if required and pour vinegar all over the stung area.

To learn more about other types of marine stingers, visit www.marinestingers.com