

JELLY-FISH WARNING



An initiative by:



Governo dos Açores
Secretaria Regional do Mar, Ciência e Tecnologia



With the support:



JELLY-FISH WARNING

WHAT ARE JELLYFISH?

They are gelatinous animals that can be found in the water column or at the sea surface. These animals have different sizes, shapes and colors. It is normal to find them in the Azorean coast, sea or beaches, especially in the Spring and Summer.

Jellyfish have tentacles that can release a liquid substance, potentially stinging and dangerous. This venom acts as a paralyzer for small animals, from which they feed on, or as a defense mechanism.

Also known by the name “medusa”, they have tentacles which can release a potentially stinging liquid in contact with the skin.



This jellyfish is very common in the Azores. Scientifically it is known as *Pelagia noctiluca* and lives in the water column. It has a gelatinous body usually pink and the umbrella can be up to 10 cm in diameter. The 8 tentacles can reach 2 m and have a very stinging venom. The bell also has stinging cells.



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The Portuguese Man-of-War has the scientific name of *Physalia physalis* and floats at the surface of the sea, due to its blue-purple float, full of gas. Its tentacles can reach 30 m and its venom is very dangerous for marine life and humans.



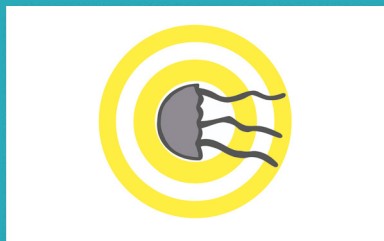
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These animals occur less frequently and are known by the name velela as they have a small sail that helps them to drift on the surface of the sea. They reach about 7 cm in diameter, have blue color and many short tentacles on its underside. The tentacles, although small, are slightly stinging, reason why the contact is not advised.

THE USE OF “JELLYFISH ALERT” FLAGS IN BATHING AREAS OF THE AZORES

To inform and warn users a signage was created, using flags, in order to prevent and minimize contact with jellyfish.

JELLYFISH **WARNING**



Hoisted by the lifeguard when there are some sightings and/or a few complaints of stings.

JELLYFISH **DANGER**



Hoisted by the lifeguard when there are plenty of sightings and/or several complaints bites. In this case sea bathing is not recommended.

ASSOCIATION TO SEA STATE FLAGS (RED, YELLOW AND GREEN):

- The jellyfish alert flag shall be raised on its own flagpole or, alternatively, on the flagpole 1 m below the sea state flag;
- Hoisting Jellyfish Flags should not have any implication with the sea state flags;
- Hoisting the Jellyfish Danger Flag will involve hoisting the yellow sea state flag;
- In the event that the red sea state flag is hoisted, no jellyfish flag shall be hoisted.

Contact with a jellyfish can cause skin irritation and even burns or other serious and damaging reactions.

When the bather is stung by a jellyfish he must leave the water as quickly as possible, and go immediately to the lifeguard to get treatment.

SYMPTOMS WHEN STUNG BY A JELLYFISH

When bitten, the person will feel a shock sensation throughout. After it, the main symptoms of a jellyfish burn are severe pain and burning sensation (heat/burning) at the site and even irritation, redness, swelling and itching.

FIRST AID IN CASE OF JELLYFISH CONTACT

- Do not rub or scratch the affected area to avoid spreading the poison
- Do not use fresh water, alcohol or ammonia
- Do not use bandages
- Wash carefully with sea water
- Carefully remove the jellyfish tentacles using gloves, plastic forceps and a saline solution or sea water
- If possible, apply baking soda mixed in equal parts with seawater
- Apply cold (cold sea water or ice pack) to the affected area to relieve pain (note the ice can not be applied directly to the skin, it should be wrapped in a cloth)
- Take a pain reliever to relieve the pain
- Apply a thin layer of ointment for burns

FIRST AID IN CASE OF PORTUGUESE MAN-OF-WAR CONTACT

- Do not rub or scratch the affected area to avoid spreading the poison
- Do not use fresh water, alcohol or ammonia
- Do not use bandages
- Wash carefully with sea water
- Carefully remove the jellyfish tentacles using gloves, plastic forceps and a saline solution or sea water
- If possible, apply vinegar to the wound
- Apply warm bandages or warm water to relieve the pain
- In case of contact please consult medical assistance as soon as possible

ATTENTION

Some people are especially sensitive to jellyfish stings and poison and may have severe allergic reactions, such as shortness of breath, palpitations, cramps, nausea, vomiting, fever, fainting, seizures, cardiac arrhythmias, and respiratory problems. In these cases they should be referred immediately to the emergency department.

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More information about bathing areas in the Azorean coastline at
www.aguasbalneares.azores.gov.pt

More information about jellyfish and Portuguese man-of-war sightings at
www.medusa.uac.pt