

Surf Life Saving BVI Position Statement Shark Bite

INTRODUCTION

Sharks live in the ocean, just like we live on land, though they do have a much greater tendency to stay in their natural habitat. Some sharks do venture into tidal estuaries and into fresh water by swimming up river. On the whole they mostly eat fish smaller than themselves.

General study of statistics globally suggests that one would have a much greater chance of being struck by lightning than being bitten by a shark. Experts believe that most shark bites result from prey identification mistakes. The shark simply mistakes a human for its normal prey, mostly taking one bite and realising the mistake it moves on.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Everyone using the ocean whether professionally or for leisure should be aware of the risks involved and take the necessary precautions for the activity they are undertaking. The ocean is not our natural environment and by just being in it or on it you are at risk. Sharks are not the only form of marine life.
2. Lifeguards should be aware of the different types of shark that inhabit the region, including their eating and breeding habits.
3. If a shark bite occurs, persons in the water should be advised to leave the water until the threat has ended.
4. If a Lifeguard observes a shark bite situation, the Lifeguard should notify other Lifeguards and determine the most appropriate course of action. It should be noted that the best and most protected equipment for rescue is that of a boat.
5. Once the victim has been rescued the appropriate first aid should be given with particular care to stopping bleeding and treatment for shock. Immediate evacuation to hospital is recommended.

CARIBBEAN SHARKS

Blacktip *Carcharhinus limbatus*, Caribbean Reef *Carcharhinus perezii*, Oceanic Whitetip *Carcharhinus longimanus*, Tiger *Galeocerdo cuvier*, Whale *Rhincodon tyus*, Black Nose *Carcharhinus acronotus*, Nurse *Ginglymostoma cirratum*, Bull *Carcharhinus leucas*, Silky *Carcharhinus falciformis*, Lemon *Negaprion brevirostris*, Caribbean Sharpnose *Rhizoprionodon porosus*, Scalloped Hammerhead *Sphyrna lewini*, Great Hammerhead *Sphyrna mokarran*,

CONCLUSION

There have been only a few reported incidents of shark bite in the Virgin Islands and no reported deaths. Indeed you are probably more at risk from yourself or a fellow human being than from a shark.

Recommended Reading – In Depth Divers' Guide SHARKS by Jeremy Stafford-Deitsch
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