



## **Rip Currents - What are they? The Dangers? - How to Escape?**

**Having good aquatic skills, and being safe in and around the water is wonderful, but there is another thing to be cautious of at the beach. This danger is called a "Rip Current".**

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Rip currents, or sometimes miscalled rip tides or under flows, occur world wide. Rip currents are powerful currents of water moving away from shore. They can sweep even the strongest, most skilled swimmer out to sea. Before going to the beach we strongly encourage you to check the latest National Weather Service forecast for local beach conditions. Many offices issue a Surf Zone Forecast.

### **How can I identify a rip current?**

Look for differences in the water color, water motion, incoming wave shape or breaking point compared to adjacent conditions. Look for:

- Channel of churning, choppy water
- Having a notable difference in water color
- Seaweed, or debris moving steadily seaward
- Break in the incoming wave pattern

e, all or none the clues may be visible.

{rokbox title=|Rip Current :: Example of Rip Current, take notice to the texture of the water. A break in t



### How can people avoid rip current problems?

- Learning to swim
- If you'll be in surf, learn to swim in surf. It's not the same as a pool or lake.
- Never swim alone.
- Swim near a lifeguard.
- Look for posted signs and warning flags, which may indicate higher than usual hazards.
- Check with lifeguards before swimming.
- Obey all instructions provided by lifeguards.

- Be cautious. Always assume rip currents are present even if you don't see them.
- If in doubt, don't go out!

### What can people do if caught in a rip current?

If caught in a rip current:

Try to remain calm to conserve energy.

- Don't fight the current.

Don't swim against a treadmill-you can't turn off. You want to step to the side of it.

Swim parallel across the current in a direction following the shoreline.

Once out of the current, swim and angle away from the current and towards shore.

Don't panic. Shallow water. Rip current strength eventually subsides offshore. When it does, swim toward shore.

To reach shore, draw attention to yourself: face the shore, wave your arms, and yell for help.

{rokbox title=|How to escape a Rip Current :: When getting carried out, swim along the shoreline parallel to the shore.

### What can people assist others who are caught in a rip current?

What can you help someone caught in a rip current by:

If you see someone in trouble, get help from a lifeguard.

If no lifeguard is available, have someone call 9-1-1.

Offer a current victim something that floats – a lifejacket, a cooler, a ball.

Yell instructions on how to escape.

Don't try to help others. Don't become a victim while trying to help someone else!

Check the local Weather - Service forecast for local beach conditions. Many city offices issue a Surf Zone Forecast.

Ask on-duty lifeguards about rip currents and any other hazards that may be present.

{rokbox title=|How can people assist others who are caught in a Rip Current? :: Get help from life guards

### □ Why are rip currents dangerous?

Rip currents pull people away from shore. They can change from moment to moment and can quickly increase to become dangerous to anyone entering the surf. Rip currents can sweep even the strongest swimmer out to sea.



### Facts about rip currents

Rip currents can flow as fast as 8 feet per second—faster than an Olympic swimmer! They can be very narrow or more than 50 yards wide. They form along the line of breaking waves; however, they may continue to pull hundreds of yards offshore. They do not pull people under the water—they pull people away from shore. Do not use the terms “rip tow” or “riptides.” These improper terms should not be used to describe them.

{rokbox title=|Rip Currents :: Rip currents can be very narrow or more than 50 yards wide.| thumbsize=

### How can I get more information about rip currents?

Check the National Weather Service forecast for local beach conditions. Many offices issue a Surf Zone Forecast. Ask on duty lifeguards about rip currents and any other hazards that may be present.

{rokbox title=|Rip Current Structure Diagram| thumbsize=|311 160|}images/stories/ripcurrent/ripchart.jpg

about rip currents can be found at the following sites:

<http://www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov>

<http://www.usla.org/ripcurrents>

<http://www.weather.gov/nwr/>

e Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services 301-713-1677 ext. 124

*e that the chance of death by drowning at a beach protected by lifeguards is 1 in 18 million.*

Download printable Rip Current flyer here:

