

Handling Hazardous Fish

Some fish are venomous, and their sting can inflict very painful wounds. Below you will find some general guidelines to their handling.

Remember:

Always handle with extreme caution.

Always wear thick rubber gloves when handling

Always use the correct sized nets with long handles, and try to keep your hands as far away from the fish as possible

Do not place hands into the tank when feeding.

Use aquarium tongs to move decorations etc that are in the tank

Avoid handling these fish when you are by yourself

First aid: Signs of a sting include intense pain, which starts at the site of the puncture and spreads along the affected limb. It may be followed by discoloration of the limb, swelling and sometimes sweating and shock. The casualty may become irrational.

Immediately obtain a first aid officer or the next best qualified person. Perform the following first aid immediately:

- Place the affected area in hot water (approx 50°C) for about 30—90 minutes or until pain subsides. Heat breaks down the venom. The water should be as hot as the casualty can stand it on parts of the body not affected by the sting. The hot water may need to be topped up to maintain temperature. (**Caution:** do not test for heat tolerance on the stung limb – the pain there may be so intense that the casualty can not feel if they are being scalded).

- Do NOT apply compression bandaging, as this will increase the pain.
- Remove any foreign body such as a spine that can come away easily.
- Monitor breathing and circulation constantly and **seek medical aid immediately.**

Freshwater fish which have venomous stings include:

Tandanus Catfish
Clown Loach
Scats
Bull Routs
Cobblerfish (Scorpion Fish)
Pufferfish

Marine Fish which have venomous stings include:

Lionfish (Zebra, Volitan)
Surgeon Fish
Rabbitfish
Triggerfish
Pufferfish
Stingrays

Further information

Emergency Services

Dial 000

Poisons Information Service

Dial 13 11 26

The **Victorian Poisons Information Centre** website contains useful information about treating Fish Stings. Visit:

www.rch.org.au/poisons

care sheet

