

Rip Current Safety: What You Should Know

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Building sandcastles with the kids. Relaxing on a beach chair beneath the shade of your beach umbrella. The sound of the waves lapping against the shore. The glistening of the water reflecting the sun's light, inviting you into the [warm water](#).

Lovely beach days like these are likely among some of your family's favorite memories. To keep making these memories for years to come, it's worthwhile to brush up on [beach safety basics](#), including how to get out of a rip current.

Be prepared to protect your loved ones by learning how to recognize a rip current and making sure each family member knows how to break free, should they ever get caught in one.

What Is a Rip Current?

A rip current is a strong, narrow channel of water that can move at speeds of up to 8 feet per second. Flowing away from the shore past the line of breaking waves, rip currents can be hazardous, pulling even the most physically fit and experienced swimmers away from the safety of the shoreline before they realize what's happened.

To see what rip currents look like, [watch this helpful video](#) from Ocean Today.

How to Identify a Rip Current

Spotting a rip current can be difficult, but practice can improve your skill at identifying dangerous areas. You can:

- Stand back from the water at an elevated spot, such as a dune or beach access area
- Look for areas where the waves aren't breaking or have foam or sediment in the water
- Check the [National Weather Service](#) Surf Zone Forecast for your local conditions before hitting the sand

Keep in mind that most rip currents happen at low tide and, generally, have nothing to do with the weather. They happen on sunny days, too.

Prepare to Keep Your Family Safe

Before you hit the beach, check the local beach conditions and wave forecast, and check whether there's a hazardous rip current statement. Strong rip currents could be present if the waves are two or three feet or higher.

Ensure you and your loved ones have a great day at the beach by being prepared and knowing how to escape a rip current in case the worst happens. You should:

- Ask the lifeguard if you have questions, especially when conditions are dangerous
- Bring a flotation device when you go in the water or know the location of life ring and flotation device stations
- Insist that a parent or other trusted adult is in the water with children at all times
- Make sure someone in your group is watching and has a mobile phone
- Swim using the buddy system
 - Understand the beach flag warning system

How to Break Free From a Rip Current

Help everyone in your family understand how to get free from a rip current. Reviewing safety tips as part of your family's vacation preparation can go a long way in keeping everyone safe.

When you're caught in a rip current, don't fight it, remain calm and swim away and out of it, parallel to the shoreline.

Don't Fight the Rip Current

Trying to swim against the rip current will exhaust you and use up your energy. Wait until you're out of the current's grip, so you have the energy to swim back to shore.

Remain Calm

Panic can be your worst enemy in an emergency situation. It can keep you from thinking clearly and making smart decisions. Remember that despite what most people think, rip currents won't pull you underwater. Once you realize what's happening, try to breathe slowly and steadily so you can keep your wits about you.

Swim Out of the Current's Pull

To escape a rip current, swim parallel along the shoreline until you can escape the current's pull, and then head back to land at an angle. If you can't reach the shore, face the beach and call or wave for help.

Understanding How to Help Rescue Someone in Danger

Always let an experienced lifeguard make a rip current rescue if one is available. They are trained to help and rescuing someone from a rip current can be very dangerous. Sadly, it's often the person attempting a rescue who drowns.

While it's tempting to jump in and pull an endangered swimmer to safety, the smartest thing you can do — for the swimmer and for yourself — is to throw them a flotation device and then run to find an experienced rescuer.

Know Where to Go at a Moment's Notice

If you experience a life-threatening emergency at the seashore, you'll need to know where to go for [care you can count on](#). Rest assured that AdventHealth has numerous emergency departments that are ready to help you through any health crisis, 24 hours a day.

Find your [nearest emergency department](#) ahead of time so that you're prepared for any scenario before heading to your favorite coast for some sandcastles and sunshine.

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