



## MARINE LIFE WARNING

August 8, 2018

Residents and beach visitors are advised of reports of jellyfish stings on Sullivan's Island this week.

Although jellyfish can move slowly through the water, it is typically the prevailing wind condition and current that will push them closer to the beach. When the wind and current produce a large area of jellyfish, biologists refer to the area as a "jellyfish bloom". Generally, in the South Atlantic region swimmers will encounter the sea nettle (occasionally referred to as a jelly-ball) and Portuguese man-of-war (bluebottle jellyfish). The sea nettle encounter can range from mild sting to a painful and uncomfortable sting. The Portuguese man-of-war is a blue or purplish gas-filled bubble (for propulsion by the wind) with long tentacles which can result in an extremely painful sting. This jellyfish should be avoided at all times.

Most jellyfish have small stinging cells in their tentacles called nematocysts. The cells inject a toxin into other marine life thus enabling it to capture food. Of course, when a swimmer comes in contact with a jellyfish and the toxin penetrates the skin it can be painful. Jellyfish will often wash ashore and eventually die; however, stings can still occur. Jellyfish on the beach is generally a good indication of a presence in the water.

The Mayo Clinic reports that complications from stings can result in a hypersensitivity reaction, causing blisters, rash or other skin irritations up to two weeks after the sting. Always take notice of increased heart rate, stomach pain or difficulty breathing. If extreme pain or breathing complications persists seek medical attention immediately.

Treatment for jellyfish includes first-aid care and medical treatment depending on the type of jellyfish, severity of the sting and individual reaction to the sting. First aid can include rinsing the area with vinegar, removing the visible tentacles with tweezers and soaking the skin in warm water for twenty minutes or so. Do not scrape the stingers, rub with a dry towel, rinse with ocean water, alcohol or ammonia or apply meat tenderizer.

In cases of adverse reaction or extreme pain do not hesitate to dial 9-1-1.