Break the grip of the Rip

The summer holiday season is approaching and many people will be heading to South Africa's exquisite coastline. While enjoying the sea, sun and sand, it is good to keep in mind the dangers of rip currents whilst swimming at your favourite beaches. So, let's all wise up on rip currents.

How to spot a rip current:

- It is a break in the incoming pattern of waves
- Water in a surf zone that is a different colour (often darker) to surrounding water
- Seaweed, bubbles or debris moving out to sea through the surf zone
- Isolated turbulent and choppy water in the surf zone

If avoidance fails: If you are caught in a rip current stay calm. Do not panic. Swim slowly **parallel to the shoreline** OR relax and let the current carry you out past the breakers until it slacks and then swim parallel to the shore before using the waves to carry you back to the beach.

Float on your back and wave one arm for help.

Rip currents are not an "undertow". They will not pull you under the water. So long as you can tread water or float you will be safe until you can escape the flow and head back to the beach. Maintain a slow and relaxed swimming pace until you reach shore OR until assistance arrives.

OTHER TIPS:

- **Talk to the lifeguards** on duty about rip currents before getting in the water.
- **Never** swim alone.
- There is nothing wrong with making young children wear approved life jackets to play in the surf. That doesn't mean you can leave them alone- but it will make them safer.
- Discuss rip currents and how to deal with them with your children.
- Swim only at beaches where lifeguards are on duty.
- Make sure that your local Sea Rescue number is in your phone.

EMERGENCY NUMBER:

You can dial 112 from any mobile phone for an emergency. Make sure you have this number saved on your phone.

Save the National Sea Rescue Institute's (NSRI) number for the region you will be visiting. The number is different for different regions and can be found on the NSRI website: **www.nsri.org.za/emergency-numbers/**

Be safe these holidays!