

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries — And How to Avoid Them



By Gil Zeimer

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries



**Raise Your Hand: Divers?
Snorkelers?
Want to Get Certified?**

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries

Overview: This presentation is on Zeimer.com

- **Share my background and qualifications**

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries

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- **Discuss these injuries and show examples**

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- **Answer questions and provide a link**

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries

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- **Share my background and qualifications**
- **Discuss these injuries and show examples**
- **Provide prevention/advice tips for each one**
- **Recap them**
- **Answer questions and provide a link**

- **Everyone here will learn something today**
- **Something you learn may save your life**

A Bit About Me...

**1981:
Grand Cayman,
Resort Course**

**Viz: 150-200'
Water Temp 82°**



A Bit About Me...

**1985:
PADI
Certification,
Granbury, TX**

**Viz: Silty, 2-10'
Water Temp 60°**



Mostly a warm water diver ever since

A Bit About Me...



Mixed marriage; live in San Rafael; daughter in D.C.

A Bit About Me...

My credentials:

- Scuba diver for over 40 years
- Healthcare/medical writer for 30+ years
- 2x skin cancer survivor
- Life-long hypochondriac
- >225 scuba articles, blogs, and newsletters



The screenshot shows the website for Zeimer's Advertising Shoppe. The header includes the company name, phone number (415-246-6072), and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The main navigation bar lists: HOME, PORTFOLIO, WHAT I WRITE, BLOG, TESTIMONIALS, and ABOUT. The page title is "Freelance Copywriter: Gil Zeimer". A search bar is present on the right. The main content area features a "MEDICAL COPY WRITER" section with a quote: "I'm not a doctor, but I often play one on the Internet because of my vast experience as a medical copywriter." – Gil Zeimer, Medical Copywriter. Below this is a featured article titled "Vein Centers for Excellence of Greenville, SC: George Hincapie, Tour de France Cyclist, owner of 'The World's Ugliest Varicose Veins'". A video player is embedded below the article, showing a cyclist (George Hincapie) on a Trek bicycle. The video player includes a "Watch on YouTube" button and "Watch later" and "Share" options. On the left side of the page, there is a "Recent Posts" section listing several articles.

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"I'm not a doctor, but I often play one on the Internet because of my vast experience as a medical copywriter." – Gil Zeimer, Medical Copywriter

Vein Centers for Excellence of Greenville, SC: George Hincapie, Tour de France Cyclist, owner of "The World's Ugliest Varicose Veins"

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- Blue Friday: A Healthy Alternative to Black Friday Shopping Insanity
- Our Roamin' Holiday 2.0 – Eating Our Way Across Italy

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries

#1: Sunburn – Most prevalent / most preventable

#2: Stings, Bites, and Scrapes

#3: Bruised Toes

#4: Bruised Legs

#5: Lower Back Pain

#6: Sore Ribs

#7: TMJ

#8: Sinus Barotrauma

#9: Mask/Nose Squeeze

#10: Broken Eye Blood Vessels

#11: Nitrogen Narcosis (“Rapture of The Deep”)

#12: “The Bends” (Decompression Sickness/DCS)

I’ve experienced 11 of 12 per “The 100-Dives Rule”

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#1: Sun Burn



When U/V radiation is absorbed, it raises your risk of skin cancer

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#1: Sun Burn

Skin Cancer

- World's most-preventable & commonly diagnosed cancer
- American Cancer Society:
More than 9,500 people are diagnosed daily in the U.S.
- 1 in 5 Americans will develop it by age 70
- > 2 people die of skin cancer in U.S. every hour
- Having 5 > sunburns doubles your risk of melanoma
- You can get a sunburn in less than 15 minutes

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#1: Sun Burn and Skin Cancer

Basal Cell Carcinoma

- Spreads slowly as pigment-producing cells become cancerous
- Can continue to grow and cause significant destruction
- Can be fatal if not treated with Mohs surgery



An open sore that does not heal



A shiny bump or nodule



A reddish patch or irritated area



A scar-like area that is flat white, yellow or waxy in color

Photos: SkinCancer.org

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#1: Sun Burn and Skin Cancer

Melanoma

- 100,000 cases diagnosed annually in the U.S. become cancerous
- Symptoms: New, unusual growth or change in a mole
- Spreads rapidly; related to most skin cancer deaths



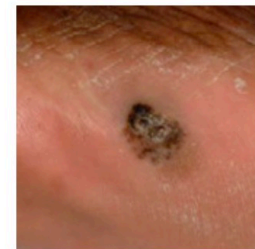
The borders of an early melanoma tend to be uneven. The edges may be scalloped or notched.



Having a mole with a variety of colors is a melanoma warning sign.



Melanoma evolved and grew outward, upward and inward in a matter of months.



Acral lentiginous melanoma

Photos: SkinCancer.org

#1: Sun Burn

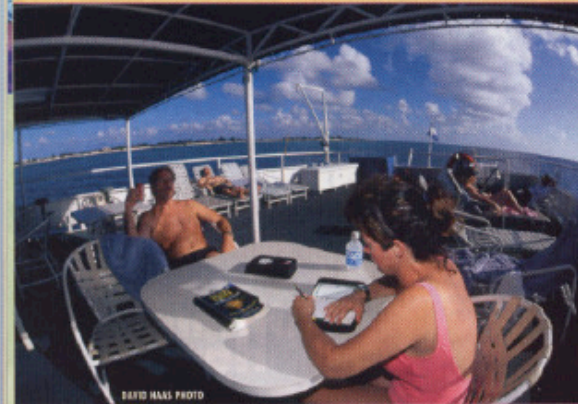
DAN Alert Diver: 2001

Lede:

“Besides rising each day, the sun brings its warmth, light — and burning rays — to us.”

The Sun Also Burns

Besides Rising Each Day, the Sun Brings Its Warmth, Light — and Burning Rays — to Us



BY GIL ZEIMER

Barbecued ribs. Braised shoulders. Baked legs. These sound like summer grilling choices, but they're really describing the effects of the sun on your skin — if you don't take precautions with sunscreens and protective clothing, that is.

Skin cancer is something that all divers should think about. As the most prevalent type of cancer, it will attack one of every seven people annually across the USA. The National Cancer Institute warns that between 40 to 50 percent of Americans who live to age 65 will develop skin cancer at least once. And if you're a blonde

or redhead, you have a two to four times higher risk of developing skin cancer.

The good news is that 90 percent of all skin cancers can be cured if they're detected and treated in time. The better news is that lathering on sunscreen, wearing a hat and donning the proper clothing can help prevent skin cancer and sunburns.

Sunscreen manufacturers have long manufactured compounds that help protect the skin against the range of rays known as ultraviolet B (UVB), the "sunburn spectrum." Recently they've recognized the additive role of longer-wave ultraviolet A (UVA) rays,

responsible for photodrug eruptions and for exacerbating photosensitive diseases like herpes simplex solar urticaria, polymorphous light eruption and discoid and systemic lupus (see story on lupus, Page 7), among others.

A sunscreen's ability to protect against UVA is known as its Sun Protection Factor (SPF), defined as the ratio between the time it takes your skin to burn versus how long it takes after applying sunscreen. An SPF of 15 provides 15 times the amount of protection you'd get without using any protection. For example, if your skin reddens after 10 minutes in the sun, your SPF 15 sunscreen would allow you to remain 150 minutes in the sun before burning.

For UVA, the degree of protection is defined as the Photostatic Protective Factor, or PPF. These values are lower because the energy contained in UVA rays is less.

Divers Do It in the Sun

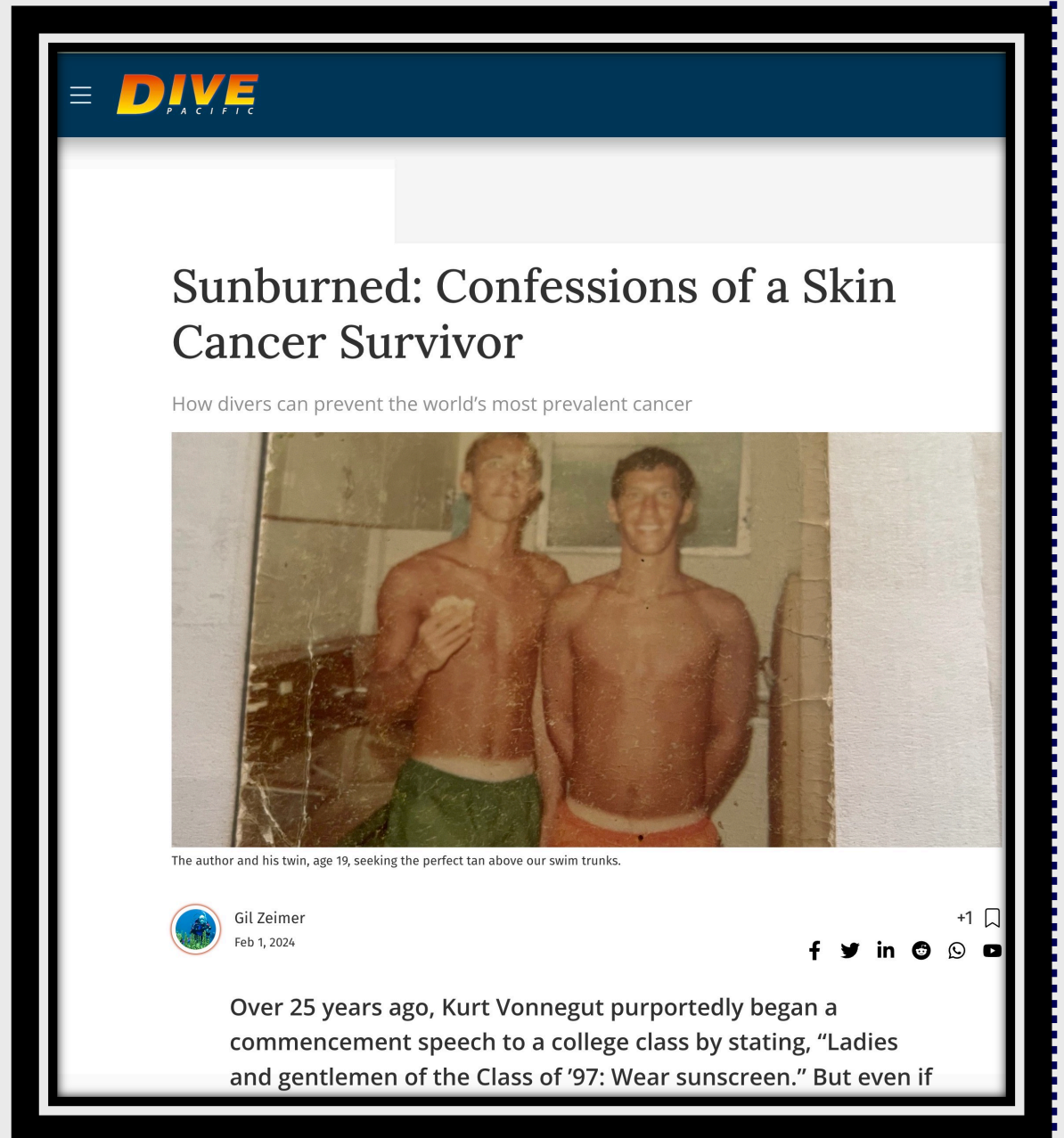
Because divers are often exposed to the sun for hours at a time while on dive boats, kayaks, and other non-shaded craft, here are some helpful tips:

- Use a sunblock with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or more when you're exposed to the sun, even when you're simply running errands. So if you're going to a pool, a beach or on a boat, a 30 to 50 SPF will protect you better, longer — especially if you choose one that's sweatproof and waterproof.

#1: Sun Burn

Dive Pacific NZ: 2024


Lede: “Over 25 years ago, Kurt Vonnegut purportedly began a commencement speech by stating, “Wear sunscreen.”




DIVE
PACIFIC


Sunburned: Confessions of a Skin Cancer Survivor







How divers can prevent the world's most prevalent cancer



The author and his twin, age 19, seeking the perfect tan above our swim trunks.

 Gil Zeimer
Feb 1, 2024

+1 

Over 25 years ago, Kurt Vonnegut purportedly began a commencement speech to a college class by stating, “Ladies and gentlemen of the Class of '97: Wear sunscreen.” But even if

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#1: Sun Burn and Skin Cancer

Prevention Tips:

- Always wear a broad-brimmed hat, sunglasses, high SPF sunscreen (30-50+), rash guard/dive skin
- “Slip, Slop, Slap”
- Apply s/s every two hours
- Wear RSS on face: it won't fog your mask
- **See dermatologist 2x/yr.**
- Call if you have questions about a mole, itching, etc.



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#1: Sun Burn and Skin Cancer

Prevention Tips: Reef Safe Sunscreens:

<https://savethereef.org/about-reef-safe-sunscreen.html>



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#1: Sun Burn and Skin Cancer

Prevention Tips: “4 Best Sunscreens of 2024”

<https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/reviews/best-sunscreen/>



Article updated 4/25/2024

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#2: Stings, Bites, and Scrapes

All kinds of stuff can hurt you:

- Fire Coral, Hydroids, Seaweed
- **Lionfish**, Scorpionfish, Stonefish
- **Jellyfish**, Portuguese Man 'O War
- **Stingrays (Steve Irwin)**
- Sea Urchins
- Sponges
- Electric Eels & Sea Snakes
- **Mosquitos, No-See-Ums**, and Sand Jiggers



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#2: Stings, Bites, and Scrapes



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries: #2: Stings, Bites, and Scrapes

DivePacific.co.nz

May 6, 2024 article:

“I was photographing a nudibranch and decided to adjust my right-hand strobe. I touched a coral with a small part of my middle finger. The pain was instant and intense.”



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#2: Stings, Bites, and Scrapes



Jellyfish



Stings

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#2: Stings, Bites and Scrapes

Prevention Tips:

- Don't touch anything
- Wear dive skin, full-length wetsuit, and neoprene cap
- Immerse in hot water
- Call DAN or a doctor
- Ask about antibiotics, antiseptic cream, and anti-inflammatories



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#3: Bruised Toes & Heels from Fin Chafing



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#3: Bruised Toes & Heels

from Fin Chafing

- **Each of your feet contain about 8,000 nerve endings**
- **They are more sensitive to pain than any other part of your body**
- **Each kick causes excruciating pain**



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#3: Bruised Toes & Heels from Fin Chafing

Prevention Tips:

- Wear dive booties or thick socks with reinforced toes/heels**
- Apply Neosporin 2x daily after diving & Band-Aids to promote healing**



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#4: Bruised Legs from Giant Strides

- This can happen once in a while
- Feels like a hard slap
- Heals rather quickly



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#4: Bruised Legs From Giant Strides

Prevention Tips:

- Wear a dive skin or a wetsuit every time you jump off a boat
- Practice giant strides from poolside or dock
- Scissors-kick hard when hitting the water to remain afloat



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#5: Lower Back Pain from Tank and Weights

- If you can't easily walk with 40-50 lbs. of BCD, tank and weights, it could be a sign of acute back problems**



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#5: Lower Back Pain from Tank and Weights

Prevention Tips:

- Make sure your BCD is tight, but not too tight to prevent
- Do stretching exercises
- Strengthen your core with Pilates
- See a Chiropractor for treatment



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#6: Sore Ribs from Your BCD

- When BCD is too tight & fully inflated, it can cause problems like trouble breathing
- It can also cause bruising



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#6: Sore Ribs from Your BCD

Prevention Tips:

- Make sure your chest harnesses and waist Velcro are tight, but not too tight
- Take deep breaths on boat or shore before diving to test BCD fit

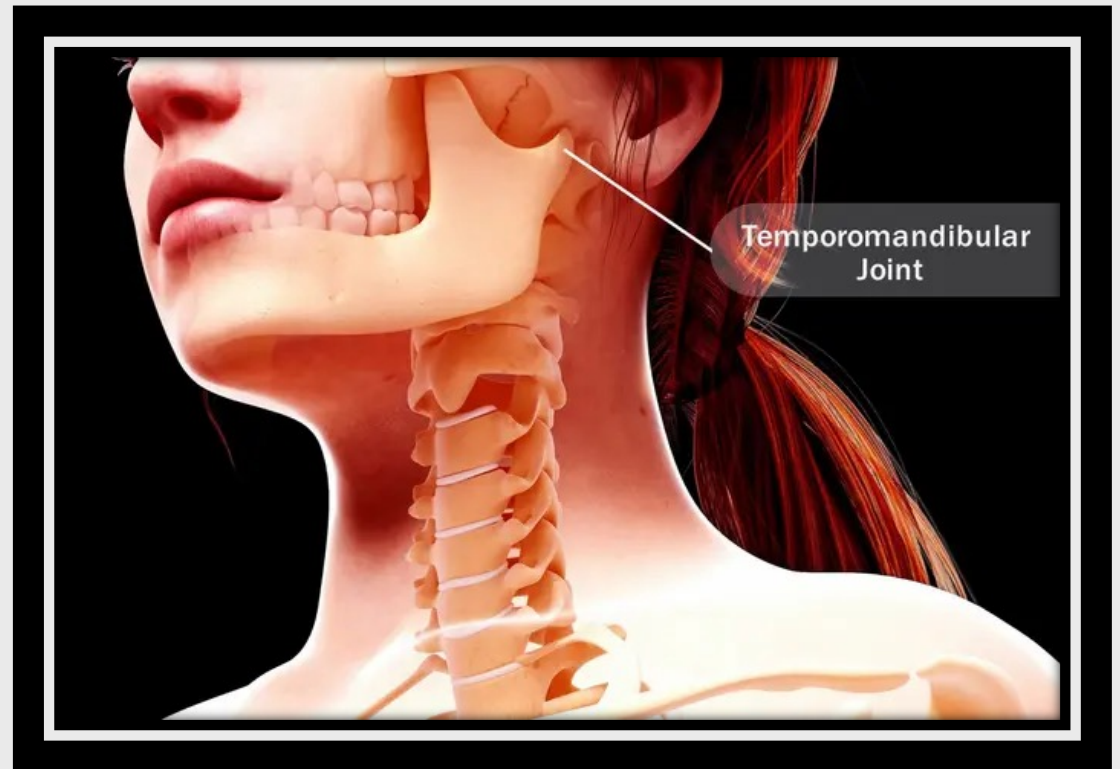


The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#7: Temporomandibular Joint Pain

TMJ is caused by:

- Grinding teeth
- Arthritis
- Dislocation of the disk between jawbone & socket
- Chewing gum
- Excessive stress
- Clenching your jaws too tightly when diving



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#7: TMJ

Prevention Tips:

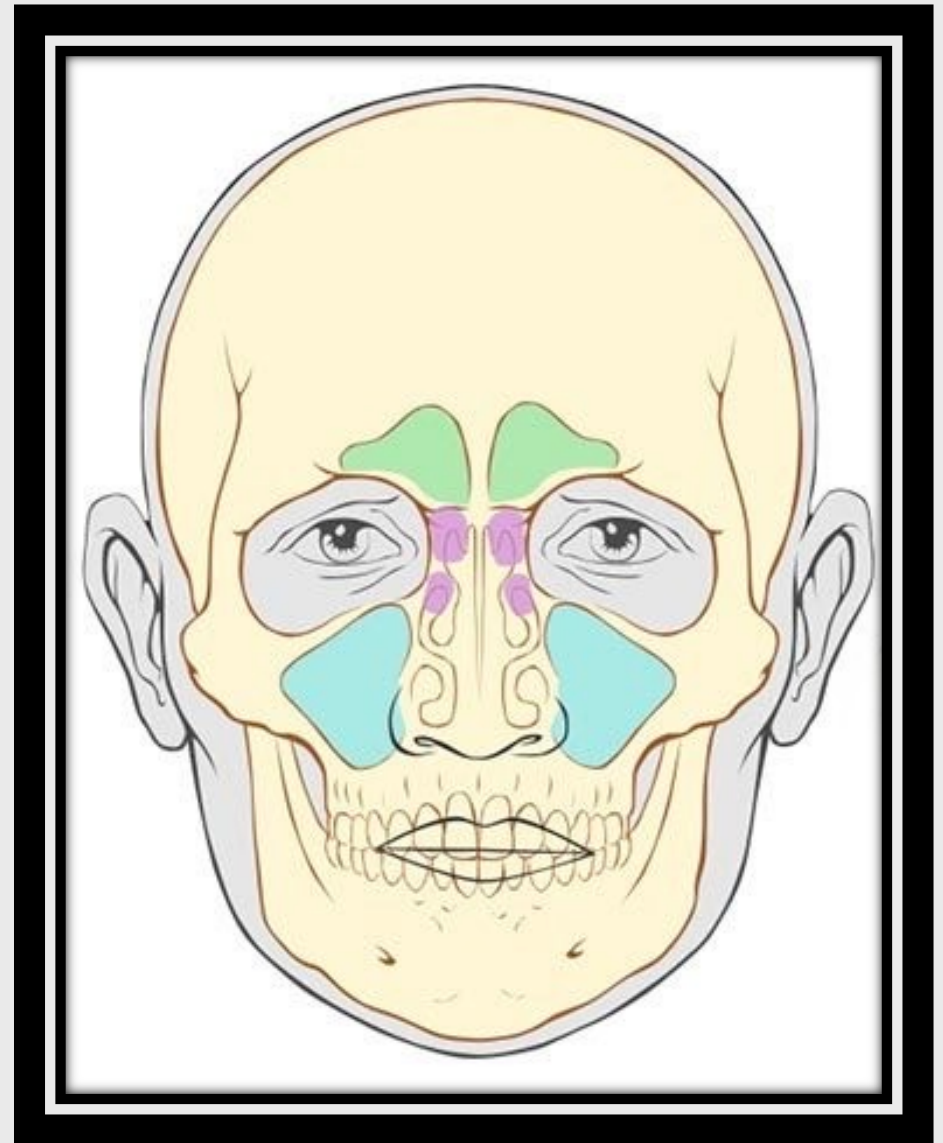
- Don't eat anything bigger than your mouth
- Chew on both sides
- Relax your jaws when diving
- **Get massage therapy**
- Try jaw-stretching exercises
- Buy a smaller mouthpiece



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#8: Sinus Barotrauma

- Common problem with sinuses (can't clear or equalize)
- Symptoms: ear pain, ringing, ear bleeding, dizziness, and sometimes hearing loss
- Often short-term; some symptoms like a broken eardrum don't go away



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#8: Sinus Barotrauma

Prevention Tips:

- If your ears aren't clearing when descending, rise a few feet...
- Hold your nose and blow gently or yawn with each breath
- Then slowly descend
- Be patient throughout your descent



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries: #8: Sinus Barotrauma

Prevention Tips: Barotrauma Prevention Kit



Nasal sprays, ear drops, sinus rinse, nasal inhaler,
Sudafed (Pseudoephedrine HCl 30mg), and throat lozenges

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#9: Mask / Nose Squeeze

- Mask: When you don't properly equalize air space in your mask
- A facial barotrauma
- Two weeks to resolve
- Nose: Pain & inflammation from sinus membranes from pressure



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#9: Mask / Nose Squeeze

Prevention Tips:

- For both: Hold nose and gently exhale or yawn to relieve any pressure on every breath
- Mask should be tight enough to stay on without straps when you inhale; blow small amounts of air through nose to equalize



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#10: Broken Blood Vessels in Eyes

- **Capillaries can burst from a mask squeeze or from rubbing your eyes**
- **Most often accompanied by a sharp pain**



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#10: Broken Blood Vessels in Eyes

Prevention Tips:

- Apply cool compresses to eyes to relieve swelling, pain, and dryness**
- Don't rub your eyes if they itch**
 - use soothing eye drops**



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries: #11: Nitrogen Narcosis

The National Institute of Health definition: “Nitrogen narcosis is a change in consciousness, neuro-muscular function, and behavior brought on by breathing compressed inert gasses... It can be fatal... It is also known as inert gas narcosis, rapture of the deep, and the Martini Effect.”

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries: #11: Nitrogen Narcosis

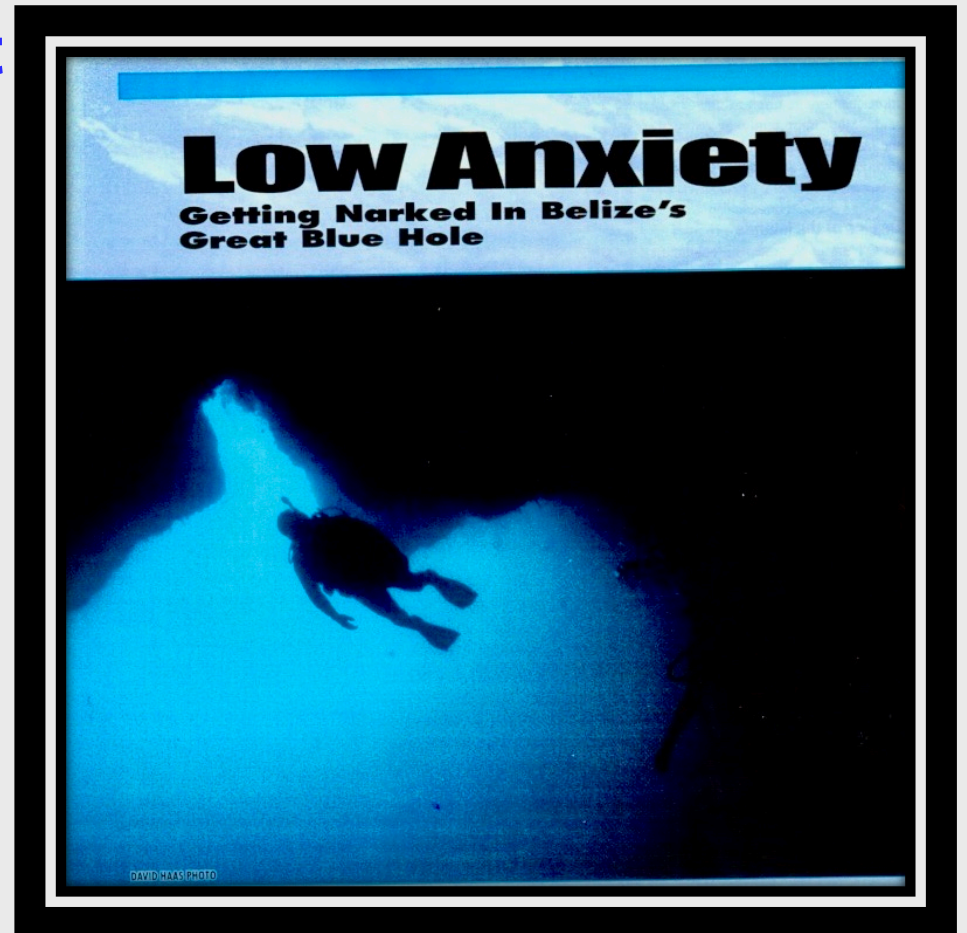


The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries: #11: Nitrogen Narcosis

Alert Diver: 6/2001

Lede: “What’s round, midnight blue, 1,000 feet wide, and over 400 feet deep?”

“The Great Blue Hole of Belize, one of the world’s foremost dive destinations. This is a spectacular underwater cavern where I got ‘narked’, ran out of air, and broke my watch 130 feet below the warm Caribbean surface.”



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries: #11: Nitrogen Narcosis

Excerpt from my Alert Diver: 6/2001

“On three occasions at 130 feet in the GBH, I raised my wrist towards my face to read my minute hand. It first read 10 minutes past the hour, then five minutes before, then 20 past. My watch was broken, but I did not realize it at the time because I was experiencing nitrogen narcosis.

“Being ‘narked’ gave me a slightly wobbly feeling. My thinking processes were hazy. Then, I started running out of air...”

The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries: #11: Nitrogen Narcosis

Prevention Tips:

- You may feel slightly drunk or not thinking clearly
- Follow your computer
- Ascend slowly to decompress for a 5- to 10-minute safety stop to eliminate nitrogen from your bloodstream



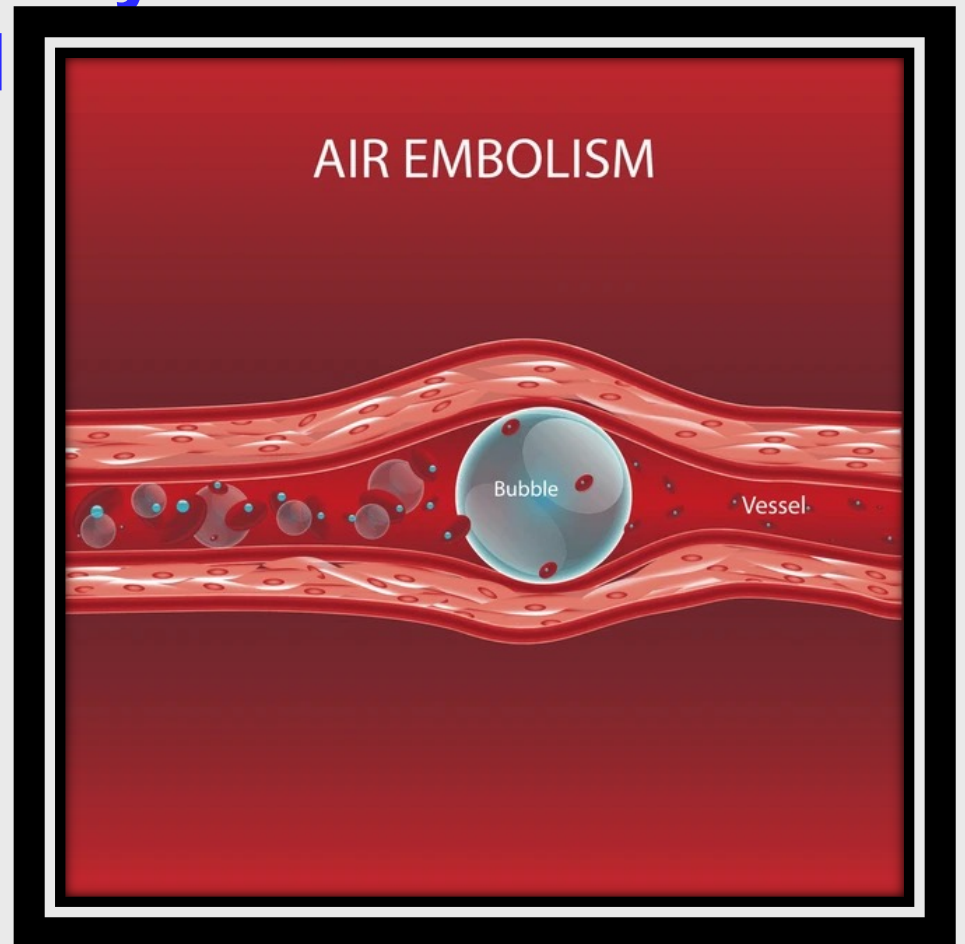
The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#12: “The Bends”

(Decompression Sickness)

I had a very close call the day before at 130 feet:

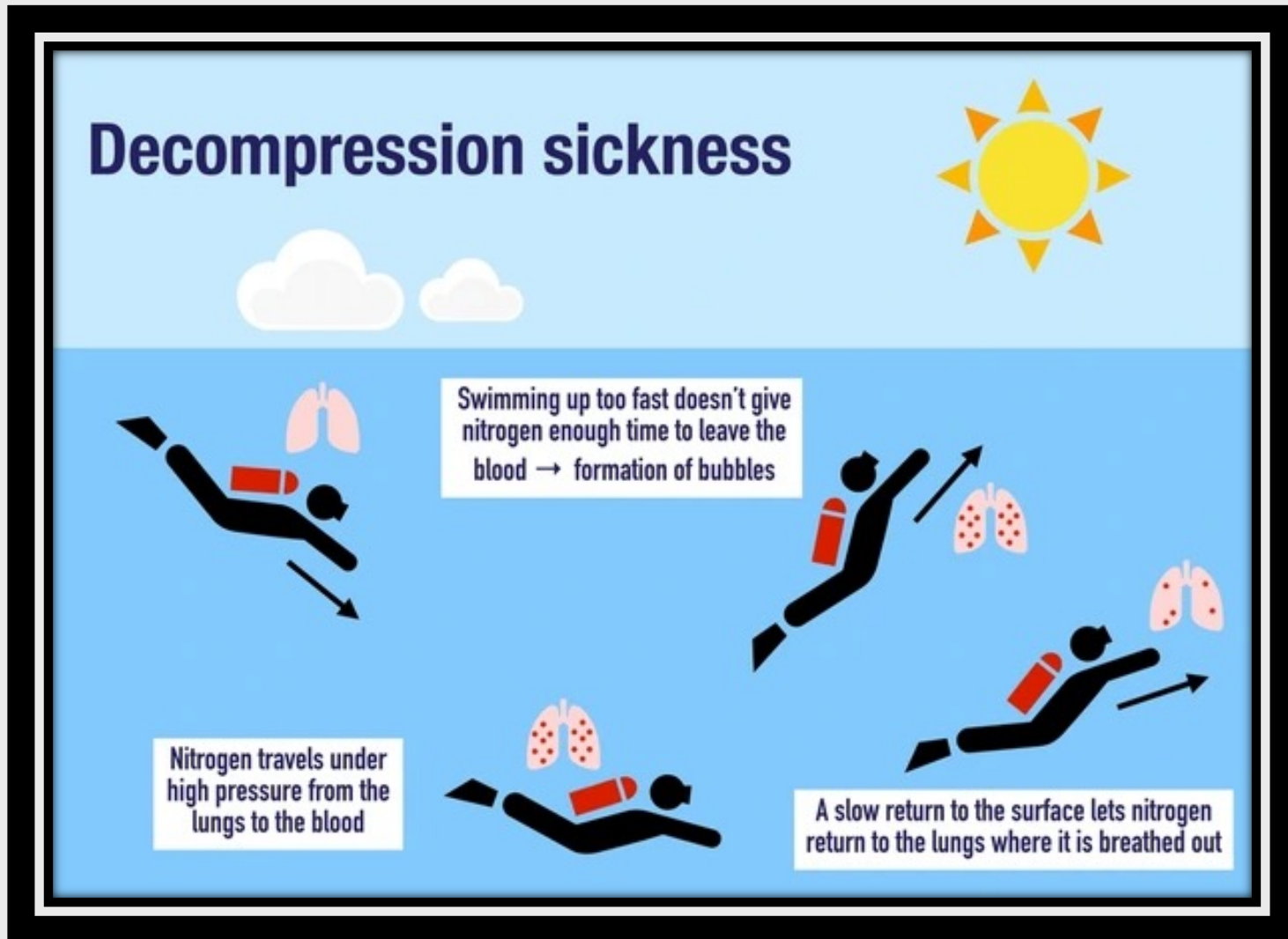
- Stuck BC button caused a very rapid ascent
- Could have resulted in nitrogen bubbles
- Minor symptoms: joint/muscle pain, fatigue, and itchiness
- Severe symptoms: paralysis, extreme pain, or even death



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#12: “The Bends” (DCS)

- DCS can happen to anyone, anytime



The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries:

#12: “The Bends” (DCS)

Prevention Tips:

- Use a dive computer to monitor your profile
- Ensure proper decompression with a safety stop
- A study by DAN of 122,000 dives revealed an incidence rate of nearly 7 in 10,000 dives = 85 total



Recap: The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries

- #1: Sunburn and Skin Cancer**
- #2: Stings, Bites, and Scrapes**
- #3: Bruised Toes**
- #4: Bruised Legs**
- #5: Lower Back Pain**
- #6: Sore Ribs**
- #7: TMJ**
- #8: Sinus Barotrauma**
- #9: Mask/Nose Squeeze**
- #10: Broken Eye Blood Vessels**
- #11: Nitrogen Narcosis (Rapture of The Deep)**
- #12: "The Bends" (Decompression Sickness)**

Recap: The 12 Most Common Diving Injuries

These conditions and others cause about 200-300 deaths annually among about 6 million active scuba divers worldwide (Quora.com):

#13: Drowning

#14: Embolisms

#14: DCS

#15: Heart Attacks: About 20-30% of deaths

<https://zeimer.com/my-portfolio/blogging/12-injuries/>

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