Irukandji Stings

The Irukandji is a small jellyfish about the size of a quarter. It is the cause of many serious jelly fish stings in Northern Australia waters. The sting can rarely cause death. They are usually found in deep water but can be swept by currents to shallow water. Divers and snorkelers are at most risk.

SYMPTOMS

Immediately after jellyfish stings there is usually not much pain. About one half hour later, there may be severe backache or headache and shooting pains in the muscles, chest and abdomen. **Irukandji stings may be associated with:**

- Feeling sick to your stomach (*nausea*) and vomiting.
- Headache.
- Sweating.
- Anxiety.
- Restlessness.
- Rapid heart rate and high blood pressure.
- Shortness of breath if fluid builds up in the lungs (rarely occurs).
- Back Pain.
- Moderate to severe muscle cramps and pain.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis of this sting is made by history and the problems that follow.

TREATMENT

Immediate

- Go to a hospital emergency department AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!
- Vinegar may be helpful if it is put on an area with a visible sting.

Follow-up

- Hospitalization is often needed for pain control.
- Medications may be given to control the high blood pressure produced.
- No anti-venoms or antidotes are available for treatment. An anti-venom is a product that counteracts the effects of venom.
- Echocardiography may be needed to monitor the heart. The toxin can cause heart problems.

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