



Diving and Safe Water Entries

Diving is a popular water activity enjoyed by many—but the risk of head, neck and spinal cord injury also means diving could be extremely dangerous without proper training and taking appropriate precautions. Before diving, it is important to think about how you'll enter the water, and to make safe choices before you do so.

By the Numbers

- **Diving is the leading sports-related cause of spinal cord injuries.** Many diving incidents leave the diver completely paralyzed from the neck down.
- **95% of diving injuries occur in water 1.5m deep or less**, in an unsupervised setting with no warning signs.
- **The average person who suffers a diving-related spinal cord injury is male, 17-22 years old**, with no formal training in diving and who is visiting the location for the first time.
- **Statistics show that spinal injuries are rare during supervised diving** into water that is at least 2.7m deep.
- **Over half of diving injuries** and deaths involve alcohol and/or drug use.
- **Over 40% of spinal injuries** caused by careless diving occur in backyard pools.



Prevention

- **In familiar and unfamiliar water, always enter feet-first the first time** to be sure of the water depth and be aware of any hazards. Diving head-first into water should be avoided unless the individual is properly trained and certain that the water is deep enough.
- **There are many factors to consider when determining whether or not it is safe to dive:** height, weight and skill level of the diver; length and depth of the diving area; and the height from which the dive will be taken. There isn't a specific water depth that will be safe for all divers—what's safe for one person might not be safe for another.
- **Most in-ground home and hotel pools, even those fitted with a diving board, are unsafe for diving,** particularly for adult males. The deep end is often too short and the diver can strike his head on the slope of the pool leading up toward the shallow end.
- **Avoid alcohol when swimming or diving**—even small amounts can increase the risk of injury.
- **Obey “No Diving” signs/markings** and diving depth regulations in open-water settings.
- **Be sure the diving area is large enough and deep enough** for the intended dive. Check the shape and length of the pool or waterfront bottom—it should be twice your height for the whole dive.
- **Dive only where there is ample clearance from the point of entry to the up-slope in front of the take-off point** (i.e. deck or dock). The presence of a diving board does not necessarily mean that it is safe to dive.
- **Only dive in clear, unobstructed water.** Always check first for objects under the surface such as logs, stumps, boulders and pilings, and be aware of variable or changing depths.

