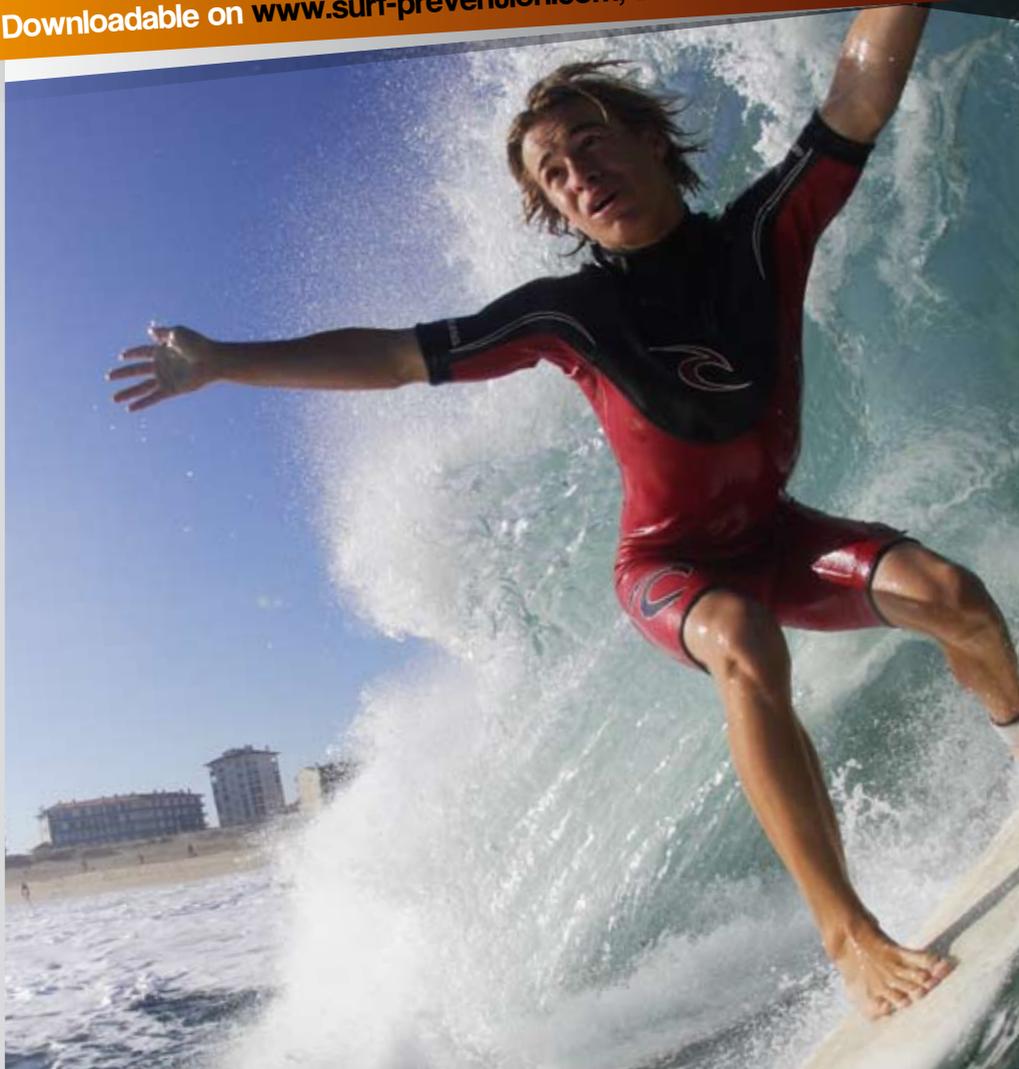


# surf preven+ion 2008

Downloadable on [www.surf-prevention.com](http://www.surf-prevention.com), the surfer's health website



# surf prevention 2008

## + summary

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Whether you are a beginner or a confirmed surfer, this guide concerns you. It aims at making you aware of the best ways to **surf in absolute safety**.

**Surfing is not a “dangerous sport”, when practiced in the right conditions.** However, too few surfers abide by the most basic rules of safety.

**Most accidents and surfing-related pathologies could be prevented through simple measures**, such as using « safe » boards, and a wider use of helmets, lycra suits and sun cream.

**Surf Prevention** aims at gathering both surfers and the relevant medical authorities around the issue of surfers' safety.

This year, **Surf Prevention** insists upon how to **prevent accidents**, and on **protection from the sun**.

You will be able to increase your knowledge of these issues on the following website : **[www.surf-prevention.com](http://www.surf-prevention.com)**, or in the **Surfers' Survival Guide**, the surfer's health guide.

Happy surfing !

**Dr Guillaume Barucq**

Surf Prevention-editor

## getting ready

getting ready

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Before surfing, you have to **tame the ocean, through observation and respect**. The sea always proves much stronger.

Being a **good swimmer** is the main prerequisite to surfing : you have to be able to swim at sea over a long distance.

Surfing is a demanding sport. If you have not been exercising for a long time, **get back to regular practice several weeks before surfing**.

Surfing requires **a healthy lifestyle, with a balanced diet and regular fluid intake**.

**To be a good surfer**, you need to develop several abilities, such as stamina, strength, tonicity, suppleness and balance, but also style, commitment and intuition.

The best way to train to become a surfer is **regular practice**. You can also try supplementary sports like bodysurfing or *stand-up paddle surfing*.



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# 2 initiation

**With or without a coach?** It's better to take the good advice of an experienced surfer to deal with your first waves. If you have never practiced any board sports, it is advised to take classes with an instructor. You had better have a coach by your side in the water, to intervene quicker if ever there is a problem. An instructor should hold a state licence, as well as the national first aid and rescue at sea certificate.

**How do classes take place?** The pupils are divided according to their ages and levels. An instructor cannot take care of more than 8 students at a time. For children aged less than 7, and adults over 65, private lessons are recommended.

**What school to choose?** Many schools are endorsed by the French Surfing Federation ( [HYPERLINK «http://www.surfingfrance.com»](http://www.surfingfrance.com) [www.surfingfrance.com](http://www.surfingfrance.com)). Some schools are not, but still abide by a strict quality charter. The « School » licence that you subscribe to will have you insured in civil liability and in individual accident guarantee during your lesson hours.

**Where to start?** The spot shall be well-known for its « easy » waves. Classes must be cancelled in cases of big shore-breaks, or when the sea is too rough, more so in case of red flag days. You should surf away from free-surfers.



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# +3 gear

**7 surfing accidents out of 10 are caused by a surfboard.** Surfing with a « safe » board will allow you to decrease the dangers.

If you are a beginner, you should use a **soft board**, or at least a soft-decked board. Your board should match your height and size : your coach or a surf-shop professional will advise you.

If you surf with a hard board, choose one which is rounded at the front and at the back. If the nose of your board is sharp, use a nose guard, which will limit the risks of lacerations.

Fins are to blame for 6 lacerations out of 10 : choose one which is the least sharp possible. Go for **flexible fins** for children, or **soft-edged** fins.

**Your leash should be neither too short nor too long.** Undo the knots of your leash, and tie the velcro strap to the rear peg. Any leash has the ability to snap, so you must be able to reach the shore swimming.



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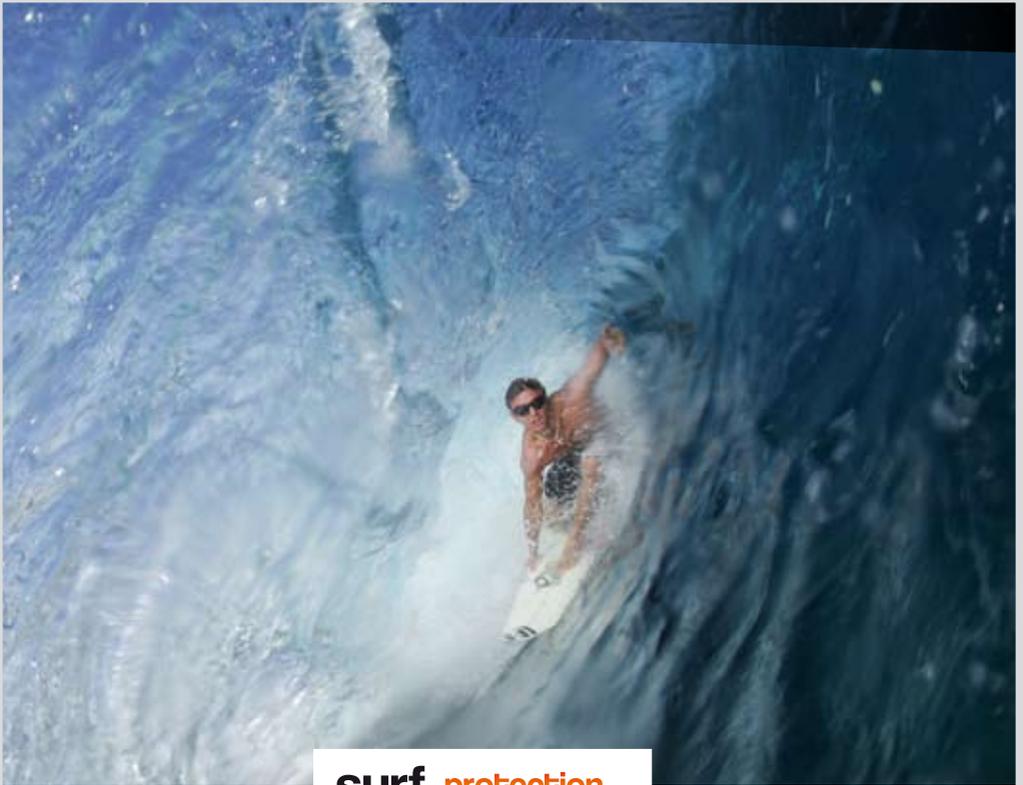
# +4 protection

One accident out of 2 involves the surfers's head. **Protecting your face is a reflex worthy acquiring.** Wearing a helmet is also recommended.

You should use a **wetsuit adapted** to the water's temperature, the wind's strength and your own resistance to the cold. It ought to be like a second skin, it will protect you from sunrays and minor wounds. You should also wear a **lycra rashvest** whenever you surf in boardshorts, or to prevent rashes underneath your wetsuit.

To prevent the risks of ear infection, eardrum trauma or surfer's ear (exostoses), wearing **ear plugs** is advised. Smooth silicon models, such as Doc's Proplugs®, various models of standard plugs or neoprene bands can be found at your nearest pharmacist or surf shop. Custom-made plugs can be made by a hearing aid specialist.

The surfer's eyes are subjected to UV rays and reverberation, which can cause acute pathology, such as conjunctivitis, or long-term issues, such as cataracts. **Prevention relies on wearing good-quality sunglasses, with maximum protection against UV rays.** You can find sunglasses designed for water sports, upon which you can adapt corrective lenses.



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# 5 before surfing

**Subscribe to a French Surfing Federation licence with a club, in order to be covered for civil liability, individual guarantees and judicial assistance insurance.**

**Take a close look at conditions before surfing.** You must check the spot out long enough to see at least 2 sets of waves breaking. Ask yourself the following questions :

- What are the tide times? What is the tidal range?
- How big are the waves? How do they break?
- How often do sets of waves come in?
- Are there many people in the water? If you can't see anybody, always wonder why- is it because of danger, or pollution? If there are too many people, wait until there are fewer surfers in the water : **risks of collision in overcrowded spots are twice as important in surfing as in skiing!**
- Is the current strong?
- Where to go into the water, and where to get out? If you dive from rocks, they might be covered in moss : beware not to slip.

**Warm-up** before surfing : a 10-minute jogging on the sand, a few moves and some limbering up will allow you to be immediately efficient in the water, and will prevent muscle lesions... Check out all the warming-up advice on :

[www.surf-prevention.com](http://www.surf-prevention.com)

**Wax your board** using a bar adapted to the water's temperature.



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# 6

## priority rules

One should abide by the following rules, for the sake of both safety and politeness. **Current regulations require that there be only one surfer for each wave.** The first surfer in action on a wave has priority for the duration of his ride : either because he took off deeper (see the picture), or because he took off before the others.

A surfer who has taken the wave has priority over a surfer who is paddling out. A surfer who is paddling out has to skirt round the surfing zone across the inside of the waves, and not across the shoulder. If there is a risk of collision, the priority surfer should try to get behind the inconvenient surfer, and do his best to avoid him.

If, at take-off, both the right-hand and left-hand directions are surfable, priority is for the first surfer in action in the chosen direction. A second surfer may still go in the opposite direction on the same wave, but only if he does not cross paths with the first one (see the picture).

When two different peaks meet, surfers should not cross paths but leave the wave long before the meeting point so as to avoid any risk of collision (see the picture).

Manners are the golden rule. Don't systematically "snake" the other surfers in order to be in the best position for the next series of waves. Wait your turn! Don't get angry if someone inadvertently ignores your priority on the wave. **Be polite with everyone on the water.**



**surf** priority rules  
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## the surfing session

**Go slowly into the water, especially when it's hot outside, and when the water is cool.** Start by wetting your face and neck. Don't go surfing after a hearty or boozy meal.

You will learn how to get over the waves before they break, or to go under, duck-diving. **If you let go of your board under a wave, make sure that there is nobody else behind,** and don't try to catch your board grabbing the leash, because you might hurt your hand.

While waiting for the waves, **don't sit inside the line-up** where the surfers are waiting for the waves- otherwise, when the set arrives, you might end up in the impact zone, and bother the surfers who are taking off.

On the wave, stay focused on the lip-line, and on the obstacles to avoid. **Don't brush past the other surfers.** Anticipate the breaking wave, and get out before the wave closes out on you, kicking-out through or straight ahead of the wave before it shuts down.

**In case of a fall,** avoid at any cost going down to the bottom headfirst. Try to fall flat, or on your feet or hands. When you reach the surface after a fall, the board may fall back on you or bounce back to you : **protect your head and especially your eyes with your hands.**

**Two one-hour sessions are better than one two-hour session.** By dividing up your sessions, you will be able to regain strength, to drink water and to eat lightly before going back in.



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## **Important**

*Always check the weather forecast before going surfing. Don't ever surf in a storm. If the conditions look difficult, don't overestimate your strength- stay on the beach if you don't have a good feeling about the session. Always surf between friends, and watch each other's backs.*

# 8

## danger zones

**Shore Break.** Don't ever turn your back on the ocean! You might be surprised by a devastating shore-break wave... This shore break gathers all its energy, and ends up crashing on the sand. Most serious accidents happen there. Don't surf a shore break!

**Shallow Waters.** They represent a hazard when waves are strong because you may be thrown violently to the bottom. Whether the bottom is sandy or rocky, it may cause trauma. Be twice as cautious when the waves break on shallow water.

**Current.** Ask the lifeguards for advice to help you spot them. If you are caught in strong current or in a "rip", don't fight it. Let it take you out to sea, and take advantage of the moment it falters to get out. Don't try to reach your starting point on the beach, even if you get out 300 metres away. When the current is strong, spot a landmark on the shore and try not to drift away from it.

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**surf** danger zones  
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# +9

## how to treat a laceration?

**These are the most common lesions in surfing.** Most of the time, they are caused by the fins, or the board's nose. **Any wound, even a slight one, may get infected if it is not properly treated.** Your tetanus vaccine has to be up to date.

### How to treat a shallow cut?

- 1) The victim has to be comfortably positioned, either sitting or lying down, in case he or she would feel dizzy.
- 2) Wash your hands carefully, and protect them with gloves.
- 3) Wash the sore aplenty with water or physiological salt solution. Remove all fragments (sand, glass fibers...)
- 4) Disinfect the sore : soak a sterilized compress with an antiseptic such as Betadine®, chlorhexidine or Dakin's solution...Wipe the laceration from the centre to the outside, then use another compress until the sore is completely and entirely disinfected.
- 5) Put a dressing or plaster on the laceration. It can be left to heal to the air as long as it is not exposed to dirt, rubbing, sun or water. Water-proof dressing can be found- they last more or less long according to where they are put. Ask your pharmacist for advice.



**Deep lacerations.** If you have a deep cut, you have to see a doctor in the hours that follow to know whether the wound needs stitching. Any cut to the hand must be shown to a doctor.

**In the following days, you have to follow the evolution of the laceration.** If the area around the wound becomes hot, swollen, painful or pus-filled, you need to go to the doctor as soon as possible.

**The sun and seawater are the two enemies of good healing.** A laceration requires that you don't surf for at least one week. Then, you have to put on sun cream with the highest protection factor each time you go in the sun for the next 6 months.

how to treat a laceration?

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## What to do about a haemorrhagic laceration?



If the laceration bleeds profusely, the first reflex is to stop the haemorrhage by pressing directly on the sore with your hand or with a plastic bag, a piece of cloth... Don't remove foreign bodies from the wound. To be able to move, make a compressive dressing by putting a compress or a handkerchief on the laceration, and by maintaining it with a bandage or a scarf. You have to make it tight enough for the bleeding

to stop. If blood keeps on running through the dressing, put a second dressing over the first one.

Call for help as soon as possible by calling 15 or 112. A tourniquet can only be used as last resort, and only at arm's or thigh's level. Watch over the victim until the rescue party arrive; don't give him or her anything to drink or to eat.



# 10

## sun protection

A surfer's body is more exposed to sunrays than in other sports. Overexposure has hazardous consequences:

- **Accelerated aging of the skin;**
- **Sunburns**, all the more dangerous for younger people;
- **Skin cancers**, especially the **terrible melanoma**.

We are not all equal before the sun. Everything depends on our **phototype**. The clearer it is, the more you need to protect yourself from sunrays- everyone should behave according to his or her skin type.

**Phototype 1** : a red-haired and fair-skinned surfer with freckles gets severe sunburns, and never tans. He is the one who should be most careful.

**Phototype 2** : a fair-skinned surfer with blond hair and blue eyes is very likely to get sunburns. He has to expose himself little by little over short periods of time, using cream with a high sun protection factor (SPF).

**Phototype 3** : a brown-haired, fair-skinned and brown-eyed surfer can get tanned, but he also has to expose himself little by little, and to use protection so as to avoid sunburns.

**Phototype 4** : a brown-skinned, dark-haired and brown-eyed surfer has a tendency to get tanned quickly. This doesn't mean that he should not use protection.

**Phototype 5** : a dark-skinned, black-eyed and dark-haired surfer tans very easily, and doesn't get sunburnt very often.

**Phototype 6** : A black-skinned, black-eyed and black-haired surfer is naturally protected against sunshine. Yet, he should still use a minimal protection.

**Look for the shade**, especially between noon and 2 pm.

**Wear clothes.** On the sand, wear glasses, a broad-brimmed hat or a cap. Wear long-sleeved shirts. Fabrics don't always protect the same way : the tighter the weaving, the darker the colour and the dryer the fabric, the better protected you are. Surf in long-sleeved lycra rashvests!



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**Don't get toasted!** A surfer has to protect himself from sunshine. The seawater may be cool, but it doesn't protect you against UV rays. UV rays shine through clouds, and you can also get sunburnt in cloudy weather. Check the UV-ray index daily : [www.meteofrance.com](http://www.meteofrance.com).

**Put some sun cream on.** It has to protect you from both UVB and UVA. The fairer the skin, the higher the protection factor has to be. The cream must be waterproof, but you should still put several layers : once every two hours at least, and once after each session. Spread a thick layer of cream evenly. Just because you have put on some cream does not mean



that your sessions should last too long.



## + conclusion

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If you abide by this advice, you should have a nice summer surfing. But there is no such thing as zero-risk, and accidents happen. That is the reason why each surfer should have taken some **first-aid training (www.croix-rouge.fr)** to know how to react in case of emergency.

Risks also exist outside of the water. If you have to take your car or a motorbike to go surfing or to go to a party, **drive safely.**

If you throw a party, you don't need alcohol to have fun- in any case, drink sensibly. Stay away from drugs (cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine...)

Eventually, remember that Sexually Transmitted Diseases still exist : some of them are even increasing in numbers. **Be more cautious than ever and always use a condom!**

Find all our prevention advice on

**[www.surf-prevention.com](http://www.surf-prevention.com)**

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# + short glossary

## Surfing

**Rip** : a bowl of fine sand that forms a laguna where the water is apparently calm. When the water level in the bowl gets higher than in the ocean, it suddenly empties, creating a very powerful current towards the open sea.

**Leash** : a rope that links the surfer to the rear of his board. A surfer ties it to his peg with a Velcro strap, so as not to lose his board.

**Line-up** : the area where surfers position themselves to wait for the best waves.

**Stand-up paddle surfing** : a variety of surfing which is practiced with a board that floats enough for the surfer to stand up on it, and to row with a paddle.

**Take-off** : starting off on a wave.

**Wax** : paraffin that you spread over the top of your board in order to avoid slipping.

## Medical science

**Cataract** : opacification of the eye's lens, causing a progressive decrease in vision. Its apparition may be made easier by overexposure to ultraviolet rays of the sun.

**Exostosis** : progressive development of bony outgrowths in the external auditory canal, furthered by repeated exposure to cold water and wind. This pathology may cause repeated ear infections, and a decline in hearing.

**Melanoma** : a cancer developing at the expense of the skin-pigment cells. The likeliest victims are fair-skinned people who practice overexposure to sunshine. It has to be tracked very early : any suspicious "beauty spot" requires an immediate visit to a doctor or to a dermatologist.

**Suture** : a medical gesture that aims at closing a laceration by bringing the two edges close together. There are several ways of making a suture : stitching with thread and needles, adhesive skin closure or even liquid skin adhesive.