



To: Physicians, Nurses, and Other Health Care Providers in American Samoa  
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Subject: Fish Sting Update  
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Stonefish, lionfish, catfish, stingrays, and other marine creatures can deliver venom through spines when stepped on or handled.

Stings typically cause severe local pain and variable degrees of swelling.

Stingrays can cause severe traumatic injury if the thoracoabdominal area is involved.

Stonefish stings are capable of causing systemic toxicity. Hypotension and cardiac dysrhythmias have been reported.

Potential complications include retained spine fragments and bacterial infection.

Stinging fish toxins are heat labile, and hot water immersion often provides relief.

The affected part should be immersed in the hottest water that the patient can tolerate (40-45 °C) for up to 90 minutes, taking care not to cause burn injury (avoid hot water immersion if local or regional anesthesia has been given).

Opioid analgesics or local/regional anesthesia may be needed.

Wound care should include X-rays and wound exploration to look for foreign bodies. Wounds should be copiously irrigated with saline.

Tetanus immunization should be updated as needed.

Prophylactic antibiotics are generally not recommended for superficial wounds.

For deep puncture wounds, antibiotic prophylaxis may be considered with coverage for *Vibrio* and other marine organisms. Options include oral trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole and IV third generation cephalosporins such as cefotaxime or ceftriaxone.

Patients with hypotension, dysrhythmias, or refractory pain should be admitted to the hospital.

**Our trained staff of nurse specialists in poison information and physician toxicologists is available 24 hours a day to answer your questions. In American Samoa, health care professionals and the public can reach the Poison Center by calling 1-800-222-1222.**