

SHARK FACTS

- Sharks have existed for more than 400-million years.
- As top predators, sharks are critical for maintaining a healthy and balanced marine ecosystem.
- Sharks are slow growing, late to mature, and produce few offspring making them extremely vulnerable and slow to recover from overexploitation.
- A number of shark species are considered threatened or endangered.
- Great white sharks are a prohibited species in Massachusetts. It is illegal to harvest them.
- It is estimated that 70 to over 100 million sharks are harvested each year, some of which are killed just for their fins.



Great white sharks have been drawn back to the Cape because of a growing seal population, which has rebounded after nearly being hunted to extinction. Shark attacks are rare events. Millions of us swim in the oceans each year, with just a handful of attacks. The only way to completely rule out a close encounter with a shark is to stay on the shore.

Through research we gain a better understanding of sharks and their behavior, which will allow us to improve public safety.



OTHER RESOURCES

Massachusetts Shark Research Program
Division of Marine Fisheries
www.mass.gov/marinefisheries

Global Shark Tracking
OCEARCH
www.ocearch.org

Supporting Local Shark Research and Education
Atlantic White Shark Conservancy
www.atlanticwhiteshark.org

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CAPE COD GREAT WHITE SHARK SAFETY



Cape Cod & The Islands

Cape Cod's waters are part of a natural and wild marine ecosystem with a rich diversity of sea life, including sharks.

This brochure provides important shark safety tips for beach goers and some facts about sharks.

SHARK SAFETY TIPS

- Don't swim where seals are present.
- Don't swim too far from shore.
- Avoid swimming early and late in the day (when sharks tend to feed).
- Swim in groups.
- Avoid wearing shiny jewelry or other accessories (which look like fish scales to a shark).
- Avoid cloudy water (sharks could mistake you for prey).
- Avoid surfing alone.
- Avoid areas with signs of baitfish or fish feeding activity - watch for diving seabirds.
- Be aware that sharks may be present between sandbars or near steep drop offs.

SWIMMERS AND WADERS CAUTION

DANGEROUS CURRENTS
RIP CURRENTS are strong, swift-moving channels of water rushing from the shore out to sea that can form anywhere. Look for foamy, sandy, choppy water, or water traveling seaward through an area of little wave activity. People entering shallow water can be caught in rip currents and quickly pulled out into deep water.
IF YOU ARE CAUGHT IN A RIP CURRENT:
➤ Stay calm. ➤ Swim parallel to the beach until you are out of the current, then swim toward shore with incoming waves. ➤ If you need assistance, wave your arms and yell for help.

SHARK ADVISORY
Great white sharks live in these waters.
Sharks prey on seals.
Avoid swimming near seals.

FOR YOUR SAFETY
➤ Sand collapses easily. Do not climb slopes or dig holes deeper than knee level.
➤ Be aware of changing tides and weather conditions.
➤ Watch your children at all times, and keep them within easy reach.
➤ Stay hydrated and avoid overexposure to the sun.
➤ Notify lifeguards in case of emergency.

BEACH RULES
➤ Pets require a permit.
➤ Pets must be on a leash.
➤ Pet owners may be in effect to protect shorebirds.
➤ Saltwater fishing requires a license.
➤ Camping is not permitted.
➤ Leave no trace - carry out what you bring.

RESOURCE PROTECTION
WE NEED THE BEACHS with birds and other wildlife that depend on this undeveloped shoreline for feeding, rest, and reproduction. Watch birds from a distance and follow regulations about dogs and kites. Keep wildlife wild by not feeding, and by removing food trash that attracts predators.

SHARK SIGHTINGS

- Notify a lifeguard or a parking lot attendant if a shark is spotted.
- Shark reports will be investigated quickly.
- Beaches will be temporarily closed to swimming or surfing.
- Signs will be posted about shark sightings and beach closures.
- Beach goers will be notified when they can re-enter the water.



DORSAL FINS FREQUENTLY MISTAKEN FOR GREAT WHITE SHARKS



great white dorsal fin

- **Ocean Sunfish** - not a shark, but a very large harmless fish that moves its fin up and down.



- **Basking Shark** - second largest living fish. A slow moving harmless shark that feeds on tiny shrimp-like plankton.



In addition to white and basking sharks, sand tiger sharks, sandbar sharks, smooth dogfish, and spiny dogfish frequently visit Massachusetts coastal waters. However, these smaller (< 5 feet), harmless sharks are not likely to be seen at the surface.