

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water...

Prevalence of dental problems in recreational SCUBA divers: A pilot survey

Br Dent J 2016; **221**: 577-581; DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/sj.bdj.2016.825>

SCUBA diving continues to attract adventure seekers and hundreds more divers are certified as instructors each year. In order to become a certified instructor divers are required to have completed 100 dives, but while this pastime may be exotic and exciting could it also be damaging divers' teeth? Obviously standards of medical fitness must be met in order to gain certification, but is oral health being overlooked? In this paper Ranna *et al.* explore the effects of diving on recreational SCUBA divers and seek to find out how prevalent these problems are.

Results were collected from a social media survey consisting of 20 questions. The questions

addressed the demographic of the diver, their diving certifications, when the problems occurred and details of the episode. Dental problems among the respondents was notably high with 41% reporting some symptoms. The most common problem was barodontalgia, otherwise known as 'tooth squeeze', and is caused by a change in atmospheric pressure.

Much like other studies, the results suggests that recreational divers suffer from dental problems more frequently than military or professional divers. It also became apparent that those who had recently undergone dental treatment were less likely to complain of dental

problems during a dive. Molars were the most frequently affected teeth. This is likely due to them being the most commonly restored, thus, air gaps beneath restorations would be affected by changes in pressure.

The authors suggest that when treating divers, dentists should take into account preexisting TMJ disorders and should even consider suggesting customised mouthpieces in order for the diver to maintain comfort during dives.

By Jonathan Coe



Listen to Stephen Hancocks' summary of this research via the BDJ Youtube Channel go.nature.com/



©Stephen Frink/Image Source/Getty