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 be planned and carried out in a responsible manner, making sure that first aid equipment and relevant phone numbers are at hand if an accident should take place. Finally, it is important to know the signs of decompression sickness and to be able to give first aid to

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 be planned and carried out in a responsible manner, making sure that first aid equipment and relevant telephone numbers are at hand should an accident take place. Finally, it is important to know the signs of decompression sickness and to be able to give first aid to

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the diver who has been affected. Beware of diving bells though; they have become more and more popular at tropical beach resorts lately as a method of experiencing nautical adventures without proper training or brains. Diving bells is an obsolete way of diving and should only be utilized by professionals in salvaging operations at great depths, like the Swedish Regal ship Vasa or the German WWII battle cruiser Bismarck. Not for looking at coral at a depth of a measly 9m in some lagoon. It can be dangerous. Don't do it. What is decompression sickness? Decompression sickness, by many referred to as "the bends" or "diving sickness", is triggered when bubbles of nitrogen forms in the blood and tissue of a body. These bubbles follow when a person rises from deep water to shallow water, where the pressure is lower, too quickly. The symptoms of the bends occur almost immediately after a completed dive and can lead to catalepsy or even death in serious cases. If you or a dive-mate exhibits symptoms of

decompression sickness, immediately stop the dive, start administrating first aid, and call a specialist in divers' medicine for help. The only treatment is to breathe 100% oxygen on site as well as in transport to treatment in a decompression chamber. Symptoms of decompression sickness

The symptoms of decompression sickness vary because the nitrogen bubbles can form in different parts of the body. The diver may complain of headache or vertigo, unusual fatigue or tiredness. He or she may have

pain in one or more joints,

muscular weakness or

tingling in the arms or legs or paralysis. Less often, breathing difficulties,

unconsciousness, shock or death may be seen.

The symptoms generally appear in a relatively short period after completing the dive.

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How to prevent decompression sickness As a recreational diver you should dive very conservatively. It doesn't matter whether you are using a dive computer or a dive table. You should plan your dive in advance. Experienced divers always select a table depth of 10 feet (3 meters) deeper than the planned actual depth. This is what all mountaineers. Under these circumstances, low pressure can still trigger decompression sickness more than 24 hours after

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