If conditions do not improve and temperatures remain elevated, the prolonged stress could kill the coral after only a few weeks.

Dead corals are often covered in algae.

If temperatures return to normal, the coral could recover its zooxanthellae and return to health.

Recovery could take weeks to months, and the recovering coral may be more susceptible to disease.

What is Coral Bleaching?

**Stage 1** - Healthy Coral

- **Polyp (Coral Animal):** Thousands of polyps make up a coral colony.
- **Zooxanthellae:** Tiny algae that live inside polyp tissues. They provide food for coral through photosynthesis and give the coral its color.

**Stage 2** - Bleached Coral

- Warmer water temperatures can stress corals, causing them to expel their zooxanthellae, or bleach.
- Bleached corals appear white, but they are still alive and can return to health if conditions improve.

**Stage 3** - Recovered Coral or Dead Coral?

- **Recovered Coral:** If conditions do not improve and temperatures remain elevated, the prolonged stress could kill the coral after only a few weeks.
- **Dead Coral:** Dead corals are often covered in algae.

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**Time between Stage 1 and Stage 2:** Days - Weeks

**Time between Stage 2 and Stage 3 (Death):** Days - Weeks

**Time between Stage 2 and Stage 3 (Recovery):** Weeks - Months
CORAL BLEACHING IDENTIFICATION

**HEALTHY ▼**
- Boulder brain coral (healthy reef)
- Boulder star coral (healthy reef)
- Lettuce coral (healthy reef)
- Staghorn coral (healthy reef)

**PALING ▼**
- Boulder brain coral (paling)
- Symmetrical brain coral (paling)
- Boulder star coral (paling)
- Boulder brain coral (paling)

**BLEACHED ▼**
- Boulder brain coral (bleached)
- Staghorn coral (bleached)
- Lettuce coral (bleached)
- Smooth star coral (bleached)

**DEAD ▼**
- Boulder brain coral (dead)
- Knobby brain coral (dead)
- Finger coral (dead)
- Cactus coral (dead)

**CORAL DISEASES (NOT BLEACHING) ▼**
- Black Band Disease
- White Plague Disease
- White Pox Disease
- Yellow Band Disease