

Vitamin sea

The sea's song calls us to refresh in its salty refuge. Naturopath Caroline Robertson explores why BEACH is short for the 'Best Escape Anyone Can Have.'

Play in the sand

Walking or running on sand stimulates the 200,000-plus nerve endings on the soles of the feet and engages muscles that don't activate when wearing shoes on stable ground. This helps plantar fasciitis and mimics a reflexology session. Scientists found that sand exercise takes 250% more energy than on a hard surface. Soft sand is more challenging than hard sand. Walking barefoot also clears electromagnetic frequencies from our electrically overwhelmed bodies. To deeply ground yourself and increase your metabolism, try the Amazonian shamanic ritual of a sand grave. Apparently burying your body in sand tricks the brain into thinking that you also weigh more, increasing your metabolism. For a mindful meditation, try sand sculpting or writing.

YOU pad barefoot onto soft, warm sand, inhale the salty air, listen to the gentle waves, and gaze at the endless azure horizon. A tonic trip to the seaside has been prescribed by physicians since before modern medicine's founder Hippocrates coined the term thalassotherapy. The four element energies of sand, sea, sun and sky envelop all in a healing experience. And with over 620,000 kilometres of coastline on earth, there's room for everyone to reap the rewards of coastal therapy for free.

Beach benefits

Sand: From crunchy breadcrumbs to fine white dust, its consistency varies but its qualities are consistent. Sand is a silica-rich exfoliant. While a barefoot beach walk gives a smoothing pedicure, Brazilians buff their whole body with wet sand for skin like a luminous shell. Try this by wearing as little as possible and immersing yourself in salt water. Sit on wet sand and scrub soggy sand vigorously from toes to top, gently on the face. Pay special attention to toes, joints and creases. Get fresh sloppy sand that hasn't been stepped on. Your skin will tingle from the antiseptic salt, clearing acne and blackheads.

Sea: Just looking at the big blue shifts our brain waves into meditative mode, inducing serenity and inner space to counterbalance the clutter of crammed schedules. Blue is a cooling colour with many medicinal effects, including lowering blood pressure and easing insomnia. Dubbed the 'blue space' effect by scientists, blue is antiseptic, enhances expression, communication and creativity. No wonder many artists lived by the sea, including Gauguin. People with water-view houses are happier, according to research in the US, Britain and Japan. Maybe this is

why Hawaii was ranked the happiest country in the world for six Gallop surveys. Interestingly the homoeopathic remedy Nat Mur (sea salt) is prescribed to ease depression. Floating on salt water, body surfing, board sporting or swimming, we soak up trace minerals of magnesium, potassium, calcium, sodium and iodide. These pull out impurities, relax muscles, soothe skin, boost immunity, ease arthritis, balance the thyroid, cleanse hair and clear the respiratory tract. The combination of moderate sun and saltwater is particularly effective to ease psoriasis, cutaneous T-cell lymphoma, dandruff, dermatitis and eczema. It's so effective that the national health service in several countries funds Black Sea stays for patients with these skin issues. Seawater increases skin elasticity and helps heal acne, cuts, sore throats and mouth ulcers. Water is a wonderful medium for exercise as the gravity-free environment eases aches,



* Blissful beach meditation

- 1 Enjoy a slow barefoot walk by the shore.
- 2 Looking down while feeling the earth, say "sand."
- 3 Look to the side seeing water, and say "sea."
- 4 Look up and say "sky."
- 5 Look to the other side and say "mountains."
- 6 Look at your body and say "me."
- 7 For a minute while walking recite this smooth cyclical chant "sand, sea, sky, mountains, me."
- 8 Stand by the shore with feet hip-width apart and knees slightly bent to practise ocean breathing (Ujjayi). As the wave swells towards you, inhale with the your throat slightly closed like a gentle snore. Rock back on your feet and spread your open palmed arms out to the side like wings. As the wave rolls away sway forward, exhale out the mouth and sweep your arms forward into heart prayer pose. Repeat until you feel the sea's chi fill you.

promotes circulation to the upper body, and massages the body via hydrostatic pressure while enhancing circulation and lymph flow. Tissue tension unfurls, allowing flowing movement which soothes inflammatory conditions like fibromyalgia. Walking in water also adds extra resistance for strength and stability. If far from the sea, simulate a salty session in a float tank or soak in an Epsom salt/Dead Sea salt bath.

Sun: If you want a sunny disposition turn to the sun, says Melbourne's Baker Heart Research Institute. More sun made people happier, less stressed, and deeper sleepers, according to this study. Solar rays increase endorphin production and vitamin D synthesis. At least 3 minutes of sun exposure a day can increase vitamin D, which protects against osteoporosis, heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, psoriasis and autoimmune conditions. Phototherapy is also applied for hyperbilirubinemia and

Seasonal Affective Disorder. To prevent skin cancer wear a hat with a natural SPF 30+ sunscreen and avoid the sun from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunburn is eased with dilute lavender and cool aloe vera gel.

Air: Sleeping to the sound of waves rolling up the shore is sedating due to the negative ions promoting serotonin and dopamine. If land-locked, use a sound machine with sea sounds and a salt lamp to simulate this effect. Sea air can promote longevity as its negative ions boost oxygenation, neutralise free radicals, reduce bacteria and increase immunity. *

“The sea, once it casts its spell, holds one in its net of wonder forever.”
Jacques-Yves Cousteau,
oceanographer

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