



HEAD TO THE BEACH THIS SUMMER, IT'S GOOD FOR YOU!

BY RACQUEL FORAN

The purpose of our regular Balance article is to remind and encourage our readers to maintain a balanced life. Too much of anything is never good, dance included. It is important to expand your mind by experiencing and trying new things. It is also important to give your body a rest from the rigours of dance. Summer is the perfect time to take a break, and there is no better place to do it than the beach.

Literally everything about the beach is good for you, and as Canadians we are lucky to have access to a wide range of beaches. Even our landlocked provinces have amazing lakes with sandy beaches. For those of you that don't have easy access to the beach, I highly recommend a day, weekend, or even an extended trip to one. Here are just a few reasons why.

SUNSHINE

The sun gets a bad rap. There is the obvious negative, sunburn; and the not so obvious but much more serious, cancer. And neither of these things should be taken lightly. It is important to limit the amount of time you spend in the sun, especially during midday, and it is also imperative that you wear sunscreen, a hat, and sunglasses. But having said all that, the sun is good for you. You need it.

The sun is our best source of vitamin D, and in Canada we generally don't get enough of it. It is the UVB rays in sun that cause our skin to produce vitamin D. The further you live from the equator, the weaker UVB rays are. This means in the

fall and winter months you can't make much vitamin D, meaning you might need to take a supplement. However, a simple 15-minute walk in the sunshine each day in the late spring and summer months will likely help you produce enough vitamin D on your own. So, get out and take a walk, and what better place to do it than on a sandy beach?

SAND

Believe it or not, sand is also pretty good for you. Firstly, it's fun to play in, and having fun is always a positive. But sand is beneficial for more than just building castles, it is also great for your legs and skin.

Yup, you read right, great legs and skin from spending some time in the sand. Since you've got to get out and take in some rays, you might as well get the added benefit of walking in the sand. One study published in the *Journal of Experimental Biology* found that walking on sand requires approximately two times more mechanical work than walking on a hard surface, and you use twice the energy. Walking barefoot on the uneven surface of a beach also challenges and teaches your brain to react to changing surfaces which in turn will improve your balance, coordination, and agility. As for the great skin, the sand will act as a natural exfoliant and help smooth away all the rough skin on your feet.

SALT WATER

After your nourishing walk, a swim in the salt water is the perfect way to refresh. It will do wonders for your skin, too. Salt is a natural antibacterial; a good soak in the salt water will help clear up problem

acne and speed the healing of scrapes and cuts. The buoyancy of the salt water also makes it easier to float, taking the pressure off your hardworking joints and muscles.

SEA AIR

Have you ever spent a day at the beach and felt better afterwards? That's because a walk, a swim and, some relaxation time can't help but be good for you. Although there are few scientific studies, and those that do exist don't necessarily prove cause and effect, it has long been believed that time at the beach is therapeutic.

One UK study did show a "small but significant increase in the percentage of people reporting good health among populations residing closer to the sea." Other research has shown sea air to have therapeutic benefits for patients with lung disease. Patients that breathed ocean air reported improved lung function, less coughing, and less sinus pressure. So, breathe deeply while you're lying on that beach.

Perhaps the benefits of salt water and sea air don't help those of you at the lake but getting any kind of fresh air is good for you and a little time in any kind of water is always therapeutic, so I still consider both are benefits when visiting a fresh water beach.

Although doctors aren't yet writing prescriptions to visit the beach, perhaps with a little more research one day they will. In the meantime, I will take the lead and prescribe a visit for you, because even if it doesn't help anything, it certainly can't hurt. ☺