

By DR. JOSEPH MERICLA

thicker, slow-flowing blood. This blood-thinning effect is so profound that if you are taking a blood thinner, you should consult your doctor before you start grounding regularly. And monitor your medication dosage carefully—your doctor may be able to adjust it.²¹

How can something so simple have such profound health benefits? Engaging in activities that intrinsically feel good are often good for your health—like the feeling of the afternoon sun warming your bare skin.

→ Walking barefoot outside, with the soles of your feet free to mesh with the surface of the Earth, is one such case. What makes Earthing, or grounding—walking barefoot outside—so powerful? It creates a direct connection between your body and the Earth, which is not only a simple pleasure but can serve to actually make you healthier. Like getting regular sun exposure, walking barefoot outside is an underappreciated simple foundational practice that you can easily establish.

What Does Electricity Have to Do with It?

Without electricity, you would not be alive—and not because you wouldn't be able to watch your favorite TV program or warm your home at night. You are a bioelectrical being, essentially a collection of electrical circuits, in which tens of trillions of cells constantly transmit and receive energy as they govern every action you take, every physiological function you perform, and every thought you create.

All your movements, behaviors, and actions are energized by electricity. You are, in fact, a conductor of electricity. Your body is made up primarily of water, after all, in which a variety of charged ions, called electrolytes, are dissolved.

The Earth is also an electrical entity. Charged with a virtually limitless supply of electrons that come from lightning, it is essentially a supercharged battery overflowing with electrons.

When you, a bioelectrical being, directly touch the Earth—making contact between the ground and your skin, which is an excellent conductor of electricity—you absorb a steady flow of free electrons into your body, which helps create the conditions for your body to effortlessly heal itself.

And the most effortless way to make this connection is to walk barefoot outside. (There are some caveats, which I'll cover in just a moment.)

Health Benefits of Going Barefoot Outside

Grounding works to improve health on several levels, but its most important benefit is its ability to neutralize free radicals and reduce chronic inflammation.

You've heard about free radicals—most likely in an unfavorable light, as the source of oxidative stress and damage throughout the body. But as with so many traditionally deemed bad guys, like cholesterol, there's more to the story than that. Free radicals also play a role in healing. Free radicals are electron-loving particles that are important to your immune response. If you are exposed to a virus, for example, your body will send free radicals to snatch electrons from the virus molecules, thereby destroying them. They are an important part of the healing—otherwise known as the inflammatory—response.

The problem with free radicals comes when they outnumber the bad guys, such as viruses. Think of a roving pack of vigilantes inside your body: free radicals will begin attacking anything that crosses their path, including healthy cells, cell membranes, DNA, and proteins, looking for electrons to consume. Once those previously healthy cells lose an electron, they become free radicals

themselves, and the process perpetuates itself. The result is an inflammatory response that is never turned off and becomes chronic. And chronic inflammation is associated with more than eighty diseases (see below for specifics).

The good news is that reconnecting to the Earth gives you access to a steady, and overlooked, supply of free electrons to neutralize free radicals when there isn't an injury to repair or an invader to combat. Grounding is the equivalent of providing your free radicals with a banquet of electrons. By quenching the fire of inflammation by neutralizing those destructive free radicals, grounding is one of the most powerful natural antioxidants you can take into your body.

DISEASES ASSOCIATED WITH INFLAMMATION

- Allergies
- ALS
- Alzheimer's disease
- Anemia
- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Autism
- Cancer
- Cardiovascular disease
- Crohn's disease
- Eczema
- Fibromyalgia
- Lupus
- Multiple sclerosis
- Pain
- Psoriasis
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Type 1 diabetes
- Type 2 diabetes

Spending time outside with bare feet in contact with the ground even for short periods can yield significant benefits. One of my readers at Mercola.com, a schoolteacher from California, reports: "I have been sitting daily on my front porch with my feet in the grass for about thirty minutes. The first thing I noticed was that when I get up in the morning, I am not as groggy as before. I awake at six and am ready to hit the ground running. The

second thing I noticed relates to digestion. Food seems to move through me at an easier pace. Now my pants fit better!"

Another reader, Graham, an artist in London, found relief from insomnia that had lasted twenty years by going barefoot in a nearby park for an hour a day. Not making any other changes, Graham was pleasantly shocked to regularly—and effortlessly—get seven and a half hours of sleep a night. He also reported waking up feeling full of energy, being more creative, and being less likely to get bogged down in minor annoyances. As an added benefit, his chronic eczema lessened dramatically and nearly disappeared. Mind you, the connection between Graham's barefoot outside time and his reduction in symptoms isn't proven. But it can't hurt you to take off your shoes when you venture outside and conditions allow.

How to Connect to the Earth

The simplest way to get grounded is to be barefoot outside with your feet directly on the Earth—whether it's dirt, sand, rock, or even an unpainted concrete sidewalk. You really start to see benefits, such as stress reduction and lessened pain, after spending thirty minutes in direct connection to the ground—but any amount of time is better than none at all. The more compromised your health is, the more time you should spend grounding. (There are a couple of exceptions, which I'll cover more in just a moment.)

That's really it—just kick off your shoes and go outside. There's no need to overthink this.

Yet you have multiple options for directly connecting to the healing energy of the Earth. Remember that some surfaces and materials are good conductors of electricity (meaning they enable electricity to flow through them) while others are insulators

(meaning they prevent the flow of electricity). Also, moist surfaces are more conductive than dry ones.

Keeping all that in mind, here's a list to help you choose the best surfaces for your outdoor barefoot time. Good grounding surfaces include:

- Sand
- Grass (preferably moist)
- Bare soil
- Stone and rock
- Concrete and brick (as long as it's directly on the Earth and not painted or sealed; sealed concrete tends to look shiny and won't have small cracks running through it)²²

The following surfaces will *not* ground you, as they are insulators:

- Asphalt
- Wood
- Rubber and plastic
- Vinyl
- Tar or tarmac

You know this innately, if you've ever done it, but because water is also an excellent conductor, an ideal location for walking barefoot is right along the water at the beach, or on grass that is wet with morning dew. (Swimming in the ocean is a fabulous way to ground, as the seawater conducts the electricity from the ocean floor. Grounding helps explain some of the renowned healing properties of saltwater.)

In order to ground, you don't have to walk, exercise, or even stand. You can sit in a chair and read a book. So long as your bare feet are in direct contact with the ground, you are officially "Earthing." You can also sit or lie on grass or sand.

vitamin D. And barefoot outdoor exercise that's strenuous may also help speed up your tissue repair and ease muscle pain.



THE CHINESE PERSPECTIVE ON WALKING BAREFOOT

Your skin in general is a very good conductor. Connecting any part of it to the Earth will work. But among various parts of your body, one is especially potent: a spot right in the middle of the ball of your foot. It's known to practitioners of Traditional Chinese Medicine as Kidney 1 (K1). This acupuncture point joins all the energy pathways of the body, known as meridians: that is, it connects to every nook and cranny of your body. No wonder tai chi and qigong—the Chinese equivalents to yoga—are taught and practiced outside, without shoes.

ACUPUNCTURE POINT

