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EARTHING: HOW WALKING BAREFOOT COULD CURE YOUR INSOMNIA & MORE



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# Earthing: How Walking Barefoot Could Cure Your Insomnia & More

Earthing therapy rests on the intuitive assumption that connecting to the energy of the planet is healthy for our souls and bodies. And while there's a definite, if New-Age, appeal to the concept of energetically connecting with Mother Earth, there's also a more scientific angle to the practice, which posits that access to the abundant supply of free electrons in the (subtly negatively charged) ground can help neutralize free radicals—if only we would take off our shoes and access them. Several people in our community (including GP) swear by earthing—also called grounding—for everything from inflammation and arthritis to insomnia and depression. Below, longtime earthing-movement leader [Clint Ober](#) explains what earthing is, how it works, and—importantly—how to do it yourself.

## A Q&A with Clint Ober

Q

*How did you first discover the health effects of grounding?*

A

In my first career, I spent thirty years in the cable television industry, where all things electrical have to have a portion of their circuit connected to the earth. The air and environment contain static electricity that gives electrical wires a different potential than the earth; you could also think of it as a different amount of electrical charge. The earth will discharge or take up an infinite amount of electrons, so when

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something with electrical charge is connected to the ground, its electrical potential neutralizes. If electrical cables aren't grounded, the static will interrupt the quality and stability of the signal.

With my working knowledge of grounding, I became much more conscious of the fact that we all wear shoes with non-conductive (usually rubber) soles that insulate our bodies from the earth. In ancient times, most people either walked barefoot or on shoes with leather soles that became conductive when they were wet with sweat from our feet. I asked myself what might be the consequences of humans no longer being naturally grounded. It's intuitive that—like in a cable system—grounding would neutralize any charge in the body. After grounding myself, and a few friends who had arthritic-type health disorders, I became convinced that grounding could reduce chronic pain. So I've spent the last seventeen years trying to find out if any science supported my hypothesis.

Q

*How does grounding work and why is it so powerful?*

A

Our innate immune systems use white blood cells (known as neutrophils) to release reactive oxygen molecules (commonly known as free radicals) to oxidize and destroy pathogens and damaged cells. Free radicals have an electron imbalance that makes them electrically charged—in their quest to find a free electron and neutralize, they can attach to or steal an electron from a healthy cell, damaging it in the process. The damaged cell then needs to be removed, and the immune system sends another neutrophil to process it, starting the entire cycle over again. This is how chronic inflammation (which causes chronic pain and promotes many health disorders) is set in motion. This entire response is compounded by the fact that free radical-generating substances are present all around

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The earth has an infinite supply of free electrons, so when a person is grounded, those electrons naturally flow between the earth and the body, reducing free radicals and eliminating any static electrical charge. The reason grounding is so powerful is it reduces and prevents inflammation from occurring in the body, which in turn prevents inflammation-related health disorders.

# Q

*What are the different methods of grounding people?*

# A

The simplest and most natural method of grounding is to go outdoors and place your bare feet and hands directly on the earth—many people choose to go for a barefoot walk in the park or on the beach. (A note: Walking barefoot in your home, where minimally conductive or nonconductive materials like concrete foundations and hardwood floors insulate us from the earth's electric potential, will not have the same effect.) It takes at least a half an hour of exposure to access significant health benefits, so I recommend a minimum of thirty minutes of barefoot time outdoors daily, if possible.

For people who don't have safe access to a place to walk barefoot (or for whom it's inconvenient to do so for long periods of time), there are grounded mats that allow people to work grounded, with their bare feet placed on the mat. Grounding mats are constructed of carbon-based polyurethane and connected to a wire that can be plugged into the grounding port of your existing standard-issue electrical outlet—the specially designed plug doesn't connect to the outlet's hot slot, so there's no risk of electric shock. Carbon is a natural conductor, so when

shopping sprees from Roberto Coin and Armarium, and \$500 to get you there.

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## Other Things To DO

### THE MEDICAL MEDIUM—AND WHAT'S POTENTIALLY AT THE ROOT OF MEDICAL MYSTERIES

In the forward to the new book, *Medical Medium*, Dr. Alejandro Junger writes, "As a man of science, I have been taught to the point of indoctrination that I must only trust what I can observe, measure, test, and reproduce." But Dr. Junger then goes on to explain his career-long...

### ASK JEAN: REGULAR CONDITIONER VS. LEAVE-IN?

Dear Jean, I have average-thick hair that sometimes frizzes but is otherwise okay. I want it to be shiny and healthy—should I be using regular wash-off conditioner, or leave-

you connect the pad to the wire, which is connected to the ground through the ground port, you equalize the electrical potential of the mat with the earth, giving your body access to the planet's free electrons. In this fashion, you could spend a large part of the day grounded, even if you're working from a desk.

There are major benefits of sleeping grounded, so we've produced bed pads made with silver, which is also a natural conductor: The nylon-based, silver-plated fabric goes over your mattress and under your sheet, and plugs into the wall to access a grounded electrical circuit. The result is access to the free-radical-reducing electrical potential of the earth for the duration of the night.

We now make a complete product range of earthing products: You can ground yourself via a grounded yoga mat, patches (particularly helpful for acute pain), and even by wearing grounded shoes, which are outfitted with a conductive plug in the sole.

in?—Samantha B.

### **ASK JEAN: DO I REALLY NEED TONER?**

Q: I'm in my late thirties and still get the occasional breakout—but I'm also seeing wrinkles and some dryness. I use a great cleanser—Tata Harper Nourishing Oil cleanser—and I love Vintner's Daughter for treatment. Should I be doing anything else? Do I need a toner?  
—Bonnie D.

### **THE FRENCH GIRL BEAUTY FORMULA**

It's easier than it might look. And harder, because it's 100% about great skin, and the confidence to show off that skin. To get yourself in the mood—and mood has a great to do with French-girl beauty in general—consider the incredibly fast, fun, smart

### **HOW TO DRY BRUSH—AND WHY IT'S SO POTENT**

Stacked amongst the clear glass jars of homeopathic remedies, immune-supporting supplements, rose creams, and carrot cleansers on the sparkling shelves of The Organic Pharmacy on Bleecker Street in New York, you'll find a long wooden brush that looks straight out of an especially well-

made Norwegian  
sauna.

## Get Grounded

The OG way is to walk outdoors barefoot—a garden, park, and beach are equally effective—for a minimum of 30 minutes per day. Extra credit for grounding yourself in the office or at home, with the help of some earthing gear:



### EARTHING UNIVERSAL MAT KIT

Earthing, \$59.99

*Position under your desk and work with your bare feet placed on the mat.*



### EARTHING FITTED SHEET QUEEN KIT

Earthing, \$199.99

*Layer the silver sheet with conductive thread under your fitted sheet.*



### EARTHING PATCHES KIT (50)

Earthing, \$29.99

*Use the patch to connect an area of acute pain to a grounded outlet.*

# Q

*Can you ground yourself through any outlet?*

# A

All office buildings and homes built after the 1970's have grounded electrical outlets, which means that the round hole in the outlet is connected to an internal ground wire that is connected to the earth (many old homes that have undergone renovation have been updated with grounded electrical outlets, too). All grounding products that are commercially available to the public from reputable companies come

with a device to test outlet grounds and confirm that a working ground wire exists in the outlet.

If you live in an older home without grounded electrical outlets, you can install a ground rod or work with an electrician to update your electrical system.

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## Q

*What are the primary physical effects of grounding?*

## A

When I started grounding myself, the first noticeable effect was that I slept much better. The first thing that happens when you're grounded is that you'll feel a discharge (that the electrical static on your body drains away). It makes you breathe easier—you just feel better. Other effects, like calmness, and increased blood flow, happen over time, so you won't feel them so immediately.

One of the first serious illnesses I dealt with was a hospice patient suffering from crippling arthritis. He was unable to leave his bed, and his nurse and daughter had to help me lift him out of the bed to install the grounded sheet. A week after my visit, I got a call from the patient, who told me that a squirrel had chewed through his ground wire. It was significant for two reasons. First, this man, who had been unable to walk, was now active enough to leave the house and check the wire. Second, the effect of grounding was so dramatic that he noticed immediately when the connection was disrupted. He later told me that the grounding reduced his inflammation, and that the burning pain he felt had finally subsided. He lived six or seven years longer.

Eventually I met Dr. Stephen Sinatra, a New York-based cardiologist, who wanted to look into the effect of grounding on inflammation. Since then,

we've found that [grounding improves sleep](#), [reduces chronic pain](#), and [speeds healing](#). In fact, [many professional athletes sleep grounded](#), as it [reduces pain and facilitates quicker recovery for sore muscles](#). Other studies have found that [grounding increased energy](#) and further corroborated my anecdotal observation that [earthing improves sleep](#).

Electrical charge in the bloodstream also has an effect on blood viscosity, which is a major risk factor for heart disease. As Sinatra explains in his review of the literature: "The surface of red blood cells carries a negative electrical charge that maintains spacing of the cells in the bloodstream. The stronger the negative charge, the greater the potential of the cells to repel each other, the better (thinner) the viscosity of the blood, and the better the flow." [Grounding greatly reduces blood viscosity, particularly after exercise](#), in part helping to counteract exercise-induced inflammation.

Women who are grounded typically experience increased blood flow in their faces—they turn a little pink, like a kid that's been running around in the summertime. As a result of that effect, we're starting to explore advanced aging, because we believe grounding increases blood flow to the capillaries—the [first study on increased facial blood flow](#) was published in 2014.

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Q

*Are there emotional benefits, too?*

A

Emotional grounding is actually the most important piece of this.

I grew up on a ranch in Montana—imagine a rabbit eating grass, enjoying life, and a coyote sneaks up on him. The rabbit hears the coyote and gets a jolt of adrenaline and cortisol, so he runs, and starts zig-zagging across



the pasture. As soon as the coyote stops chasing, the rabbit will stop—and instantly shake it off and go back to eating like nothing ever happened: He can quickly discharge that adrenaline and cortisol. Today, since we're no longer naturally grounded, we hold all these natural fight-or-flight responses in the body, and there's no way to discharge them; which contributes greatly to stress and anxiety.

Grounding also affects emotional health through pain reduction—if you have pain, you're going to be emotionally stressed. If you reduce inflammation, the pain stops, you feel better, and the energy comes back. There have also been studies that indicate that [grounding improves mood, reduces stress, and has a calming effect](#).

Of course, there's also a primitive emotional effect from grounding via your bare feet, reconnecting with the earth, relaxing in nature.

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## Q

*How can grounding help with more serious long-term disease?*

## A

After fifteen years of grounding individuals with serious long-term, inflammation-related health disorders, I can say that if any person with one of those disorders were to get well-grounded for as little as one hour each day, they would experience a noticeable improvement. Then, as long as they continued grounding, they would reduce inflammation so their body could begin to heal and return to normal. There's a study underway by a Los Angeles cardiologist now to investigate the health benefits of grounding on hypertension.

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## O

*We've heard that grounding can initially cause negative effects, particularly in Lyme patients. Can you explain?*

A

Earthing is very therapeutic for people with Lyme (particularly because it facilitates such deep, sound sleep), but patients should proceed with caution. In some cases, grounding can ignite a Herxheimer reaction, which can temporarily incite fatigue, nausea, and fever—it's an inflammatory response to a die-off of bacteria. One potential explanation is that people with Lyme have thick blood and poor circulation—the spirochetes hang out in their cold fingers and toes, closed off from circulation. As soon as you ground the human body, you reduce blood viscosity so blood can get in and out of the capillaries. When that happens, the blood starts clearing out the spirochetes, creating initial flu-like symptoms that eventually clear.

---

Q

*What is the current state of research around grounding?*

A

As of today, [there are twenty-one peer-reviewed, published studies examining the health benefits of earthing already out there](#). We currently have a study underway at the Chopra Center in Carlsbad, which is designed to measure the effects of body-workers' inflammation and health as a result of being grounded during work, as well as the ongoing hypertension study with cardiologists [Dr. Howard Elkins](#) and Dr. Stephen Sinatra.

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*Clinton Ober is CEO of [EarthFX](#), a research and development company*

*located in Palm Springs, CA. Ober spent decades working in the cable industry until a health challenge in 1995 inspired him to retire and embark on a personal journey looking for a higher purpose in life. Over the past eighteen years, Ober has supported a host of research studies that collectively demonstrate that grounding reduces inflammation and promotes normal functioning of all body systems.*

*The views expressed in this article intend to highlight alternative studies and induce conversation. They are the views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of goop, and are for informational purposes only, even if and to the extent that this article features the advice of physicians and medical practitioners. This article is not, nor is it intended to be, a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, and should never be relied upon for specific medical advice.*

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