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Start 2025 by Plugging into the Earth

Last year, I saw ads on my social media feeds about mats or bed sheets that help “ground” you to the Earth’s energy, with a boast of multiple positive health effects.

I was skeptical. But in the interest of expanding my knowledge of well-being alternatives, I dug into the practice of **earthing**, also referred to as **grounding**. As it turns out, earthing can be very positive for us!

*For this article, we will use the term **earthing** to distinguish it from the mindfulness-based grounding techniques used for emotional well-being.*

What is Earthing?

Throughout history, Indigenous societies have espoused the Earth’s healing powers. In ancient China, the term Qi (pronounced “chee”) defined the vital energy that fills the universe. Thereby, earthing is the process of connecting to the Earth’s electrical energy. This practice is rooted in the theory that the electrical charges from the Earth can positively impact your body, health, and mood.

Our modern lifestyles have created unintentional barriers to physically connecting with the Earth due to our concrete cities, increased time spent indoors or in our cars, and, interestingly, the invention of rubber soles on our shoes. Even though I hike for hours each weekend in the woods, the only time I “connect” with the Earth is when I lean on a tree or sit on a rock. My thickly soled hiking boots are a constant barrier between me and the Earth’s energy.

In previous ReFresh articles we have discussed the health benefits of connecting with nature for both the mind and body. However, we have not explored how nature's electricity could be another health benefit.

[This article explains](#) how the exchange of electrical charges with the Earth can have a positive impact on our biological system. I found that this excerpt provided great clarity:

"If you think back to the last time you took a science class, you may remember that everything, including humans, is made up of atoms. These microscopic particles contain equal numbers of negatively charged electrons, which come in pairs, and positively charged protons, so an atom is neutral — unless it loses an electron.

When an atom has an unpaired electron, it becomes a "free radical" with a positive charge, capable of damaging our cells and contributing to chronic inflammation, cancer and other diseases. In this case, "positive" is not a good thing.

One reason direct physical contact with the ground might have beneficial physiological effects is the Earth's surface has a negative charge and is constantly generating electrons that could neutralize free radicals, acting as antioxidants. You may think of antioxidants as coming from food, and indeed a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and other foods that provide beta-carotene, selenium, lutein, lycopene and vitamins A, C and E help prevent cellular damage from free radicals. Still, it is interesting that we may be able to get them directly from the earth, too."

These two short videos also simply explain what is likely a very complex physics phenomenon:

[How Do I Explain Earthing to People Without Sounding "Woo Woo"?](#)

[Grounding \(Earthing\) - How To Use The Earth's Energy For Optimal Health | Over 50](#)

Simply put, earthing is a therapeutic technique that involves doing activities that electrically reconnect you to the earth.

Benefits of Earthing

There has been limited research on earthing due to funding challenges and the stigma often associated with alternatives to traditional Western medicine. However, studies that have been done show benefits, minimal negative effects, and evidence of biological mechanisms at work.

Many of the studies have been small, and could benefit from further research. Benefits reported to date include:

1. [Improved mood and reduced stress](#). Earthing may reduce stress and promote relaxation by influencing the autonomic nervous system and normalizing cortisol levels. More research is needed, including the benefits that may be gained through the earthing connection with the vagal nerve.
2. [Improved sleep and prevention or treatment of fatigue](#). Sleep research has shown improvements in sleep quality for those who practice earthing regularly. Benefits include better sleep and a reduction in nighttime pain. This may be why the most popular products for indoor earthing are mattress pads, sheets, and pillowcases.
3. [Reduced inflammation](#). Studies have found that earthing can reduce inflammation and pain due to the transfer of electrons and resulting antioxidant effect from the Earth to the body.
4. [Speed healing and reduced pain](#).
5. [Improved immune system function](#). There has been evidence that earthing can enhance immune function and potentially aid in the prevention and treatment of chronic inflammatory and autoimmune diseases.
6. [Improved multiple heart health metrics](#). Earthing has been linked to improvements in cardiovascular health including improved blood flow, reduced blood viscosity, and improved heart rate variability.
7. [Modulated autonomic nervous system function](#).

Here is a nice summary of the research, according to the National Library of Medicine in the United States:

"Grounding (Earthing) appears to improve sleep, normalize the day–night cortisol rhythm, reduce pain, reduce stress, shift the autonomic nervous system from sympathetic toward parasympathetic activation, increase heart rate variability, speed wound healing, and reduce blood viscosity."

Practicing Earthing

The best part about this health intervention is that it is *free*, and as easy as stepping outdoors. Many grounding techniques, such as walking through the grass or swimming at the beach, are relatively safe.

You can:

- Walk barefoot on the ground on any natural surface: grass, dirt, and sand
- Sit or lie down in dirt, grass or sand. It is okay to have a thin barrier of clothing, made from natural fibres such as cotton or wool
- Sit in a chair and let your bare feet touch the ground
- Swim or relax in a natural body of water
- Get your hands dirty (literally!) by touching or playing with the soil

(It is January, so not as easy to find dirt and grass. Here is a really short video on [How to Ground in the Winter Time](#))

You may also be able to experience earthing indoors, which brings us back to the ads I saw on Facebook. Products are available that claim to bring the energy of the Earth to you, including:

- Mats, blankets, sheets, or mattress pads that connect to the grounding port on any house electrical outlet. The ground port is the bottom hole of the three prongs
- Shoes or socks that are designed to not interfere with the electrical exchange with the ground
- Grounding patches or bands

Like anything you purchase, buyer beware. Carefully research products and manufacturers, and recognize that the results of using products may be different for each person.

Earthing is generally safe, provided you take basic precautions. The grounding plug does not connect to the outlet's live electricity supply, so there should be no risk of electrocution. However, it would be good practice to use a socket tester to ensure that your plug is properly grounded, and/or to consult an electrician before using the outlet. Some products come with testers, or you can Google "*outlet tester for grounding*" to find suppliers near you.

Remember that with any new wellness initiative, people who have chronic conditions, or take certain medications, should speak with their health provider before adding earthing to their self-care regimen.

Will You Connect with the Earth in 2025?

One of the goals of ReFresh is to introduce different alternatives to support well-being. As every individual's lifestyle, health status, experience and beliefs vary, so do the types of well-being options that work for them. Perhaps increasing your bodily contact with the Earth's natural electric charge may stabilize your physiology at the deepest levels, reducing inflammation, pain, and stress, while improving your blood flow, energy, and sleep. Or, maybe for you the best benefit of earthing is the time you spend sitting in nature.

Sources

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpya.bc.ca.