

Protect yourself from beach bacteria while cooling off

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The heat wave moving across parts of the U.S. may send many people flocking to beaches for relief from the heat and humidity. Before you grab your beach bag, make sure you pack a pair of sandals or water shoes.

"People should be wearing shoes if walking on a beach, especially internationally," says Mayo Clinic infectious diseases specialist Dr. Pritish Tosh.

It's not just glass and sharp shells that can cause harm. Tosh says, "Salt-water beaches are generally safe. However, depending on what part of the world, walking on a beach potentially exposes people to parasites that can burrow through the skin." He says, "In the U.S., our beaches are pretty safe, but there can be glass and shells that can puncture the skin. Even though we generally don't see the same risks of burrowing parasites as elsewhere in the world, it is still a good idea to wear some sort of protective shoes while walking on the beach."

And, if you step on glass or a sharp shell? "If you get a cut, it is important to wash it and potentially seek medical attention," adds Tosh.

Don't forget to stay hydrated and wear sunscreen if you spend time outdoors. Mayo Clinic dermatologist Dr. Dawn Marie Davis says there are immediate and long-term effects to [sun exposure](#) that include skin damage, skin cancer and premature aging.

Too much sun can also lead to what's sometimes called sun fever. Davis says, "You can get a fever from excessive sun exposure. Stay cool, drink plenty of water, wear sunscreen and protective clothing, and seek shade." She adds, "Excess sun exposure triggers the immune system - similar to contracting an infection. This is why people feel feverish and chilled when sunburned."

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