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# Dani's Page

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COMPRS



# HEALTH, BEAUTY & FITNESS

## Skin deep with Samantha Altea

### Summer's Back

Feel as if all you've been doing is lying out in the sun, or playing in the ocean this summer, and yet, you still have a sore, aching back? Live in your flip-flops, only swapping them for your most coveted Jimmy Choo high-heeled strappy sandals, but you've been getting the odd twinge? And those tranquil, romantic, "healthy" walks along the beach just breathing in fresh Hamptons air. What could possibly be wrong with them? Yet you still feel an ache the morning after... Well, if baby's got "sore" back this summer, or even a little twinge now and then, it might be because many things we take for granted are actually giving our backs a beating. So, even if you don't have any kind of back problem, it's worth taking note of the things we could and should do when enjoying summer at the beach, so we won't regret them when winter rears its ugly head. Who knew flip-flops could be bad for you? And walking on the beach...there's a healthy route to take. I spoke with New York City chiropractor Paulina Giraldo, a spine specialist who practices what she preaches.

Dr. Giraldo says that flip-flops are one of the worst offenders for backaches, because they give less support around your heel. The heel, ankle and arch of the foot stabilize the spine and back. When wearing flip-flops, none of these are being supported - thus creating back pain. Now don't worry, there's no need to hang up your favorite friendly slip ons for good; just be sure to alternate between them and solid shoes that do support your heel and ankles, like sneakers.

The same goes for sandals and high heels. Heels are bad enough year round, but summer heels, usually sandals that have less support, are even worse. Wearing heels also alters your pelvis and puts more strain and pressure on your lower back. So, according to Dr. G, avoid wearing them if you've got a back condition and, if you simply must, bring a pair of flats along just in case.

You might also want to change the way you get your rays at the beach, because chairs give no support to your lower back. Sitting in them makes

you have bad posture. "You'll find yourself in distorted positions," says the doc. To help with this, bring an inflatable cushion to support your lower back and always avoid lying on your stomach, whether in a chair, or lying on the sand. Lying on



your front puts more stress on the back and is one of the worst things you can do - even in a bed! When lying on the beach, be sure to mold the sand so that it supports your back. Even out any lumps or bumps that may make you lie somewhat twisted. You might like to put something under your knees, too, like a rolled up towel. This will decrease pressure on the back.

When walking on the sand your heel strike is deeper, meaning more stress on your hamstrings and calves, which causes back discomfort. To prevent this, try walking nearer to the edge of the water where the sand is more level and hard,

rather than negotiating soft, uneven surfaces. You may be glad you did later in the day.

Summer sports can play havoc with even the healthiest of backs. They put entirely different strains on the back and posture than winter ones. It's worth noting, however, that each sport has a unique stretch that should be done before and after the activity so as to protect your back. For these stretches, see your local chiropractor for individual exercises pertaining to your preferred sport.

Meanwhile, here are a few reasons why you might like to invest in getting a heads-up on doing those stretches:

When playing golf, it's important to stretch because your lumbar spine (lower back) is not meant to twist in the motions needed to play. Therefore, we need to warm up the muscles in that area. One tends to pivot and work around your back and shoulders during golf. The same can be said of tennis.

Water sports can also be terrible for the back. If in a boat or water skiing, jet skiing, surfing, etc, you're constantly hitting waves. Keep in mind that, while these sports are a lot of fun, you're also bouncing all over the place, jarring your back. Although it's water, when you come down hard, it's like hitting concrete. These sports can put a lot of pressure on the back. Don't be discouraged, however. "Sports in moderation and with the proper care can be a great thing, continue your passion," says Dr. Giraldo. Just be aware of the stresses and strains, be sure to stretch, and know what to do if you do feel "acute" pain. Apply ice, not heat! Ice reduces the inflammation process. Heat brings more blood and fluid to the area, which isn't good.

The best sport for your back does involve water, though. Swimming is a non-weight bearing exercise and one of the best things you can do.

So be sure to go for a dip in the ocean before summer's end. That's Doctor's Orders.

Dr. Paulina Giraldo practices in the Flat Iron district in NYC. For more info call 212-228-5554.

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