Ocean Antics

Healthy ways to Beat the Heat

By: Deborah Liv Johnson

It happens every year — desert temperatures rise until most of us retreat indoors to exercise. We escape to the gym or the mall or to a pool that's still cool. Or… we head west to find the great Pacific.

There is really nothing like the beach. With a backdrop of blue sky, sunshine, crashing waves and long stretches of sand, it's hard to come up with a more natural place for fresh air and good, clean fun.

Whether you enjoy diving into the water or walking for miles on a firm, sloping beach, ocean activities abound. Swimming, surfing, body surfing and body boarding are some of the more popular choices. There is also kayaking, wind surfing and standup paddle boarding. Non-water activities include walking, running, Frisbee, and football.

Grab a partner for some fun, basic calisthentics. Exercising on the beach can work muscles differently due to the increased resistance of the sand.

Too cold? Try a wetsuit!

Some people love to play in the ocean but aren't particularly keen about the water temperature. Wetsuits are a great way to enjoy the ocean year-round. Wearing a wetsuit also helps protect skin from sand rashes while body boarding.

There is an art to buying (and putting on) a wetsuit. Wetsuit quality and price vary — depending on how often you might use this underwater blanket, you may want to start with something in the moderate price range. Ask the salesperson how a wetsuit should fit (like a second skin) and tips for putting one on and taking it off — which can itself feel like a workout! You may also want to ask about the best way to care for your wetsuit.

Body Boarding

Not ready for surfing? Consider the next best thing — body boarding. Also called boogie boarding, body boarding can be as fun as an amusement park ride without the waiting line. Catching a wave and riding it in to shore is great fun and something to share with friends, children or even grandchildren. When choosing a body board, the top of the board should be at, or near, your belly button.

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Pay Attention to Water Conditions

Whenever you spend time at the beach or in the ocean, observe the weather and the waves, and look for flags, located at the lifeguard station, which indicate ocean hazards and surf conditions. Generally, green flags mean mild ocean hazards with the possibility of occasional larger waves and rip currents; yellow means moderate ocean hazards with frequent larger waves and rip currents; and red means extremely hazardous ocean conditions with large powerful waves and strong rip currents.

Protect Yourself

No matter what you choose to do at the beach, come prepared. Pack waterproof sun screen with a rating of at least 30 SPF and remember to reapply it throughout the day. When you're not in the water, park yourself beneath a beach umbrella or wear a long-sleeve, light-weight UV-protective shirt for even better protection. Hats and sunglasses are essential and don't forget to treat the tops of your feet with sunscreen throughout the day as well. If temperatures are cooler and the sky is overcast, pack warm clothing to layer over beach wear and always use sun screen.

Bring plenty of water, fresh fruit and healthy snacks to replenish your system. Keep them in tightly closed containers tucked inside a durable cooler that can't be opened by marauding seagulls. Avoid caffeinated drinks which can leave you dehydrated.

Now, go enjoy the beach. Surf 's up!

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