

## The 1878 Guide to Sea Bathing

For the great majority of people, bathing before breakfast is most convenient. The strong do not require to take anything before bathing, but weak and nervous people may be allowed a light breakfast first, or a cup of tea or coffee, which will do no-one any harm. In the case of some delicate people, or of those who have an inveterate prejudice against early rising, it may be better to bathe in the afternoon, when the air is warmer, and the difference of temperature between the air and the water is less.

When we talk of sea-bathing, we are thinking of its more purely curative action, and do not allude to the general hygienic action of bathing and swimming combined, when the exercise of swimming keeps up the heat of the system, and makes it safe to prolong a bath. Those who are going to bathe should warm themselves by a short walk, and should never enter the sea feeling cold.

Patients should commence bathing, if possible, on a fine day. As a rule, the baths should be made as short as possible. Patients, if they like bathing, are almost sure to err on the side of staying in too long. The first effect of a cold bath is to repel the blood from the skin, and to produce congestion of the internal organs. When the bath is over, the blood returns to the surface, and this is what is called reaction. The more prolonged the bath is, the longer will reaction be deferred, and nothing can be more disagreeable than the shivering feeling, when the reaction is slow and imperfect.

If you are very prudent, you should, on the first day, quit the sea after a single dip, gradually increasing the duration of the bath each day by a few seconds, till it lasts three to five minutes. The duration of the bath should be proportioned to the particular case and to the state of the weather.

If the sea is rough, and there is much wind, the bath should be curtailed. You should speedily regain your bathing machine, and should be well rubbed. It is not unusual, especially with the French, to take some slight stimulant on returning from the sea, or to bathe the feet in hot water; neither practice is necessary or desirable in ordinary cases.