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THE BENEFITS OF
HYDROTHERAPY

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WHAT IS HYDROTHERAPY?

Hydrotherapy is the treatment of illness and injury through the use of water, both hot and cold. Hydrotherapy treatments help your body get rid of toxins that may be causing joint pain and inflammation, help relax muscles, and help relieve pressure on joints and bones. It also relaxes you, both mentally and physically.

Hydrotherapy has been around for thousands of years. Ancient bath houses were the center of social interaction in ancient Rome, and hydrotherapy spas are still especially popular in Europe, where many were built in large mansions and estates during the 18th and 19th centuries. Used to treat common ailments like muscle cramps, muscle weakness, diabetes, circulatory diseases, arthritis, osteoarthritis, back pain, muscle, bone and connective tissue injuries, balance disorders, stress and stress-related disorders, hydrotherapy is fast becoming a popular and beneficial home health treatment, especially among seniors.

How Does Hydrotherapy Make Me Healthier?

There are two ways that hydrotherapy helps keep your body healthier: thermally and mechanically.

Beneficial Thermal Effects of Hydrotherapy

Warm and cold baths alike create certain reactions in your body tissues that help lessen pain and discomfort and improve the healing process. Warm baths open up your capillaries (the small blood vessels in your body that are closest to tissues) which leads to increased blood flow and circulation, helping your body oxygenate and heal tissue better and get rid of toxins faster. Heat also slows down your internal organs, and is good at lessening certain types of aches and pains. Heat increases the production of beneficial body hormones, and stimulates the immune system. Warm, moist air from a hot bath can help open up congested or constricted airways in your lungs, throat and sinuses. Cold baths lessen inflammation in areas of injury, and help decrease the sensitivity and pain of injured areas.

Beneficial Mechanical Effects of Hydrotherapy

The gentle tingling sensation of air bubbles and the massage-like motion of water jets create beneficial chemical reactions in your skin and tissues. This leads to increased circulation, which helps oxygenate tissues and evacuate toxins. In water, your body weighs only 10% of its normal weight, so there is a large amount of physical stress removed from your joints and bones, helping to relieve pain and discomfort. This partial weightlessness also helps relax the body, because muscles don't have to work as hard to keep the body in position and are given a chance to relax.

TREATING COMMON AILMENTS WITH HYDROTHERAPY

The four most popular types of ailments people use hydrotherapy to treat are: arthritis, lower back pain, insomnia and diabetes.

Benefits of Hydrotherapy for Arthritis

One in six Americans has some type of arthritis. It's a fairly common disease that affects our joints and progresses as we age. Generally, joints swell and become painful and sometimes hard to move, especially after exertion. The older we get, the more pronounced the symptoms.

Doctors recommend warm hydrotherapy for treating arthritis. It helps by dilating blood vessels in the body, relieving pain and easing the tension in muscles which can become tense as a result of pain. It has been shown that warm water treatment is far more effective than dry heat treatments, like heating pads. In some instances, doctors will recommend alternating hot and cold treatments, especially for treating hands and feet. The repeated dilation of arteries generally has a more profound effect on the reduction of pain in these areas.

Benefits of Hydrotherapy for Lower Back Pain

Behind colds and the flu, back pain is the #2 reason in the United States for doctor visits. Back pain can be caused by a number of things, including stiff or sore muscles, diseases, disorders or injuries of the vertebrae and connective tissue, and pinched nerves. Studies conducted over the last ten years have shown that people who suffer from back pain and who use hydrotherapy as a treatment experience marked reductions in pain versus those people who do not use hydrotherapy. In addition, people who treat their back pain with hydrotherapy use fewer drugs to control their pain, so they don't experience any of the negative side effects associated with some of these drugs.



All the thermal and mechanical benefits of hydrotherapy go to work against different types of back pain. Depending on the type of back pain you have, you may experience a complete eradication of the pain after starting a hydrotherapy regimen, or you may notice a decrease in the pain instead. Either way, hydrotherapy makes living with back pain more comfortable and provides a relaxing outlet for relief.

Benefits of Hydrotherapy for Insomnia

Almost all people suffer from insomnia - or the inability to fall asleep - at some point in their lives. For some people, insomnia can be a very severe problem, depriving their bodies of needed rest and making them feel irritable and depressed, and making them more prone to sickness. Warm baths have been shown to improve both your ability to fall asleep and the quality of your sleep, and as such, hydrotherapy is one of the most popular home remedies for insomnia and sleeplessness.

Insomnia is generally caused by having too much blood in the brain. Hot baths dilate capillaries in the body and increase blood flow to external areas and to the limbs, drawing blood away from the brain. A lower core body temperature has also been shown to

help you achieve a deeper sleep. Soaking in a warm tub at 104 degrees Fahrenheit two hours before bedtime will both lower your core body temperature and draw blood from your brain, priming you for restful sleep. Enjoying the stress reduction benefits of air and water jet massages will further relax you and make sleeping even easier.

Benefits of Hydrotherapy for Diabetes

Hydrotherapy has proven useful for helping patients with Type 2 Diabetes. In a study published in 1999 by the New England Journal of Medicine, people with Type 2 diabetes soaked in hot tubs for 30 minutes a day, 6 days a week. Doctors noticed that these patients had an easier time controlling their weight and plasma glucose levels. Some patients even required smaller doses of insulin as a result.

Patients who were unable to exercise reported even more benefits, as hydrotherapy helped increase blood flow to their skeletal muscles.

Benefits of Hydrotherapy on the Body

Hydrotherapy is helpful for relieving the symptoms of common ailments found in the torso like chest congestion, bronchitis and asthma. It can also relieve the symptoms of other chest disorders like angina. Soaking the trunk of the body in warm water helps increase blood flow to the heart and lungs and other internal organs, and will help tone muscles, decrease the size of varicose veins, ease nervousness and headaches, and help soothe irritated vocal cords. In addition, it will help lessen the pain associated with ailments affecting the abdominal and pelvic areas like cramps, hemorrhoids, kidney disorders, intestinal disorders, gall bladder disorders, liver disorders and other systemic problems that cause internal pain.

Arms and legs benefit from increased circulation, especially to the extremities, so cold hands and feet can be alleviated with hydrotherapy. Headaches, migraines, vertigo, rheumatism of the limbs, low blood pressure and nerve disorders of the limbs also notice improvement with hydrotherapy.

IMPORTANT NOTES ON HYDROTHERAPY TREATMENTS

Too much heat or cold can be bad for you, so it's important that you consult your physician before embarking upon hydrotherapy treatments to be sure the treatment is right for you. Once you and your doctor have agreed upon a treatment, be sure to monitor your progress and report any issues that arise to your doctor. This allows your doctor to make any necessary adjustments to your treatment and protects your health and safety.

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