Hydrotherapy Techniques:

Hot Foot Bath
Hot Foot Bath

Effects/benefits

A summary of some of the effects of the hot foot bath which have been demonstrated include such things as the following:

- Promotes circulation throughout the body (4, 9)
- Boosts the immune system, significantly increases lymph flow (8)
- Has neurological soothing effects such as promoting relaxation, relieves fatigue and insomnia (1, 3, 5, 6)
- Other effects include; pain relief, relief of headaches, colds, asthma and nasal congestion (7, 10, 11).
- The hot foot bath is also safer and more hygienic than taking a hot bath for many people, especially those who have heart conditions, heat intolerance or may be prone to urinary tract infections.
Contraindications

People with the following conditions should not do the hot foot bath (those with these conditions may try carefully doing a hot pack on the upper thighs or upper back to substitute, for some of the circulation benefits):

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
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<td>Numbness, loss of sensation or circulation problems in the feet</td>
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<td>Peripheral vascular disease</td>
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<td>Swelling in the feet or legs</td>
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<td>Foot sores or infections</td>
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<td>Frostbite (will cause greater tissue damage to frozen areas)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pregnancy- use with caution but reduce the time and temperature, and avoid overheating/sweating (whole body heating is to be avoided during pregnancy because of potential harm to the fetus), consult with primary caregiver</td>
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Equipment

Basin or container large enough to comfortably put your feet into
Thermometer, if available, if not, may test water with elbow
Sheet or blanket
Bath towel
Small bowl with ice water and a wash cloth
A pair of dry socks, and change of clean clothes
**Technique**

1. BASIN: Put the basin in the bath tub under the faucet and sit on the side of the tub or on a chair or stool that fits in the bathtub. While the basin is filling is a good time to take a drink of water.

2. WATER: Fill the basin with warm water at least deep enough to cover a couple of inches above ankles. The water temperature should be about 103 to 104 degrees F to begin with (39.4-40 degrees Celsius), or not too hot for your feet to tolerate it. Place your hand into the water first to make sure the water is not too hot.

3. SOAK: Place your feet in the bucket and enjoy for 10-30 minutes, adding a little more hot water whenever the water seems to cool down. For the best full-body effect, also wrap your body with a sheet or blanket, allowing the edge to drape over the foot bath basin to keep the hot water vapors close to your body.

4. ADD HEAT: Add hot water from time to time to increase the temperature gradually warmer throughout the treatment (suggested to about 110' F). Make sure you remove your feet each time before adding more hot water. Your feet will be more sensitive to heat at the beginning of the treatment, so start out cooler and gradually increase.

5. COOL CLOTH: When you start sweating and start to feel hot, dip a wash cloth into the ice water basin and wring it out, apply it to the forehead. Renew it in the cold water every 3-5 minutes as needed.

6. COLD RINSE: When finished, empty the basin in the bath tub and rinse your feet with cold water from the tub faucet for 15-30 seconds.

7. DRY WELL: Dry your feet thoroughly and put socks on. If you have been perspiring, dip the wash cloth back into the ice water basin and wring it out, then briefly rub the hot areas of your body to stop the sweating (such as chest, stomach, underarms, etc.), re-dipping the wash cloth in the cold water as needed. Dry your hair well with a towel and/or blow drier if it’s wet. Put on dry clothing.

8. REST PERIOD: Rest for at least 10 minutes then dress warmly before going outside in cool weather, in order to prevent chilling. For best results, rest or sleep for at least 30 to 60 minutes after finishing the hot foot bath in order to allow the immune system and circulation to react and stabilize, as well as to stop sweating.

(Technique references: 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11)
Additional Notes/ Precautions:

*The goal is for your feet to turn pinkish red and to sweat all over.

*Try adding a dash of lavender oil to increase the nerve-soothing effects of the hot foot bath, especially if doing it before bedtime. Lavender has been shown to help insomnia.

*Drink water before and after to help hydrate the body, boost the circulation and prevent dizziness from heat.

*You can drink hot water or herbal tea if you would like to have a stronger sweating response, but avoid caffeinated drinks due to the dehydrating effects.

*The cold compress to the forehead helps keep you from feeling too hot and prevents getting a headache or depressive feelings after the footbath from the heat. It shrinks the blood vessels of the brain through nerve reflexes.

*Finishing with cold dash of water helps to close the pores, stop sweating, and prevent chilling due to continued heat loss from dilated blood vessels.

*You can rub your skin with rubbing alcohol if you don’t have ice water handy, as a final cooling treatment (though this won’t work as a substitute for the forehead compress).

*Avoid cold drafts of air in the room during the hot foot bath, or being exposed to cold air afterword. Thorough drying with a towel and/or hair dryer, as well as putting on dry clothing also helps to avoid chilling.

*Avoid walking on the bare cold floor with bare feet after finishing the hot foot bath to prevent losing some of the good effects. Putting on clean, dry socks afterword also helps to maintain the effects of the hot foot bath longer.

*It’s better to get someone to assist you or be on stand-by if you are feeling sick, weak or dizzy, as heat can cause dizziness and even fainting. Be sure to stand up slowly to help prevent dizziness. If you are prone to dizziness or fainting, or not used to doing heat treatments, reduce the time and temperature and be sure to drink enough water.

*Avoid hydrotherapy if you’re constipated- it’s better to cleanse out the toxins before boosting circulation to avoid toxin reabsorption.

*For menstrual pain, use cool or tepid water for the final rinse instead of cold.
*The hot foot bath can be done in different places or positions, including in lying in bed, for someone who doesn’t feel strong enough to get up. Just be sure to cover a large part of the bed with plastic so it won’t get wet, and put a towel under the back of the person being treated so that the bed won’t get wet from sweat. It can also be done without a basin in the bathtub, just by plugging up the drain, but it’s requires waiting a lot longer for the bathtub to fill and is more difficult to regulate the water temperature that way. It can be done sitting in a chair some distance away from a faucet also, by using a bucket to transport the water- but this requires the assistance of a second person, and it is less convenient to regulate the water temperature.

*The hot foot bath will have the best overall therapeutic results if you first prepare the body by these three things during the day of your hot foot bath;

1) Hydrate: try drinking water with a squeeze of lemon in it, or clear herb teas

2) Internally cleanse: by having a bowel movement some time in the day

3) Provide nutrients: have a good source of vitamins and healing nutrients available in the blood (such as from eating fresh fruits, a green salad, or drinking some fresh vegetable or fruit juices)

*Helping someone you love take a hot foot bath can be one of the nicest ways to make them feel cared for. The hot foot bath is generally suitable for children if done with care to avoid burns and with keeping the time and temperature a little lower than for adults.

(Notes references: 10, 11)

It should be noted that hydrotherapy treatments can result in serious injury or complications under some circumstances. Prior medical advice should always be sought and extreme caution taken when performing any kind of hydrotherapy treatments for individuals with chronic diseases or decreased skin sensitivity. Hydroreference.com does not recommend the use of hydrotherapy for any condition without prior consultation with a physician or qualified healthcare provider.
REFERENCES:


Hydroreference.com is an effort of Hydrotherapy Interest Group (HIG), an organization of individuals who are interested in further establishing the practice of hydrotherapy through discussion, ongoing research and scientific inquiry. HIG is currently an informal non-profit organization associated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which welcomes health professionals and anyone interested in hydrotherapy to become involved.

HIG will be putting out a newsletter, the Hydrotherapy Interest Group Newsletter. The newsletter will contain articles about the practice of hydrotherapy and the science behind it, interviews with researchers and those with expertise in the field of hydrotherapy, as well as pertinent research findings. It will also have updates about the activities of HIG, including information about upcoming events or conferences and continuing education opportunities. If you’d like to receive the HIG newsletter, please enter your email address in the form at: http://www.hydroreference.com/HydrotherapyInterestGroup.html