Balneotherapy

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Meaning:

Balneotherapy (Latin: balneum "bath") is the treatment of disease by bathing, usually practiced at spas. Balneotherapy may involve hot or coldwater, massage through moving water, relaxation, or stimulation. Many mineral waters at spas are rich in particular minerals such as silica, sulfur, selenium, and radium.

Indications:

Over the several hundred years during which the science of medical balneology has developed, physicians have been able to identify the health conditions that can best be treated by healing springs.

CHRONIC DISEASES

Chronic rheumatic diseases
Functional recovery of central and peripheral neuroparalysis
Metabolic diseases, especially diabetes, obesity, and gout
Chronic gastrointestinal diseases
Chronic mild respiratory diseases
Circulatory diseases, especially moderate or mild hypertension
Peripheral circulatory diseases (affecting the hands and feet)
Chronic skin diseases
Psychosomatic and stress-related diseases
Autonomic nervous system dysfunction
Vibration disorder (a middle ear disorder affecting balance)
Sequela of (conditions resulting from) trauma
Chronic gynecological diseases

CONTRAINDICATIONS

If you have any illnesses or diseases, or are pregnant, consult with your physician before using spa therapy.
Balneotherapy Heals:

- Bathing in hot springs gradually increases the temperature of the body, thus killing harmful germs and viruses.
- Thermal bathing increases hydrostatic pressure on the body, thus increasing blood circulation and cell oxygenation. The increase in blood flow also helps dissolve and eliminate toxins from the body.
- Hot springs bathing increases the flow of oxygen-rich blood throughout the body, bringing improved nourishment to vital organs and tissues.
- Bathing in thermal water increases body metabolism, including stimulating the secretions of the intestinal tract and the liver, aiding digestion.
- Repeated hot springs bathing (especially over 3- to 4- week period) can help normalize the functions of the endocrine glands as well as the functioning of the body's autonomic nervous system.
- Trace amounts of minerals such as carbon dioxide, sulfur, calcium, magnesium, and lithium are absorbed by the body and provide healing effects to various body organs and system. These healing effects can include stimulation of the immune system, leading to enhanced immunity; physical and mental relaxation; the production of endorphins; and normalized gland function.
- Mineral springs contain high amounts of negative ions, which can help promote feelings of physical and psychological well-being.
- The direct application of mineralized thermal waters (especially those containing sulfur) can have a therapeutic effect on diseases of the skin, including psoriasis, dermatitis, and fungal infections. Some mineral waters are also used to help the healing of wounds and other skin injuries.

CAUTIONS

Avoid soaking in a hot spring alone, and don't use a spa if you are on heart medications or under the influence of other drugs or alcohol. Make sure not to overheat, drink plenty of cool water, and use private pools if you have a skin disease. The elderly should use extra caution.

Conclusion

Though balneotherapy commonly refers to mineral baths, the term may also apply to water treatments using regular hot or cold tap water. Resorts may also add minerals or essential oils to naturally-occurring hot springs. Mud-baths are also included in balneotherapy, and the dirt and water used to mix mud baths may also contain minerals which are thought to have beneficial properties.
References:
