

*As ancient as time itself, people have consumed, cleansed, cooked, and played in water. Ancient cultures incorporated water in their religious initiatory practices and worship services. Even Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, was well acquainted with water and used it in his medicinal cures.*

*~ RJ Nikola, LMT*

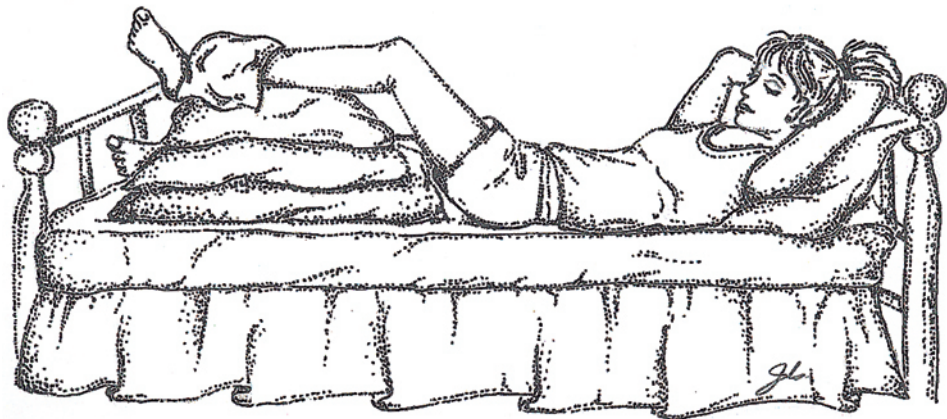
## Hydrotherapy Basics

From the ancient Greek writings of Asclepius to modern day clinical research, hydrotherapy has been around for more than 6,000 years. Indeed- using water for therapy has endeared the test of time.

Many people are aware of some of the basic principles of hydrotherapy. For example, ice is used to treat swelling and inflammation; while heat is commonly used to soothe tense muscles. In order to grasp a broader practical understanding of hydrotherapy, this article will introduce some basic techniques that are easy to use in everyday life.

### RICE

This acronym is a great way to remember how to use hydrotherapy to treat swelling, pain and inflammation. **R**est the injury site for 1-2 days, apply **I**ce directly to the injury site, and **C**ompress/**E**levate the affected area. Let's say for example you sprained your left ankle: You could prop-up your leg using pillows to 30-45 degrees (above the heart) and apply an ice compress to the injury site. The amount of rest you will need and frequency of ice applications will depend on the location and severity of your injury. A good rule of thumb is to use ice up to 48 hours post injury applying 20-minutes-on and 20-minutes-off several times throughout the day. (See illustration below)



**CRYOTHERAPY (ICE MASSAGE)**- Fill a Styrofoam cup with water and freeze it. You can then peel away the cup as you massage with the ice directly on the skin for 2 minutes or until a numbing sensation arises. Cryotherapy can be used to alleviate inflammation, numb-out pain, reduce muscle spasms, and stop hemorrhaging.

**COLD FOOT BATHS**- Fill a small tub or basin with cold water. Stand in the water for up to 5 minutes. The effects are reduced swelling, decreased pain, relieves burning/itching of the feet, improves immunity, and reduces post-exercise muscle cramping.

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## Hydrotherapy Basics (Cont'd)

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**HOT FOOT BATHS-** fill a basin with hot water, around 100 degrees. Sitting on a chair, place both feet in the water for 15-30 minutes. Essential oils and herbs may be added to the water as desired. During the treatment, keep a cool towel on your forehead and the back of your neck to prevent vascular congestion. Finish the treatment with a cold sponge bath to the feet and dry off completely.

**HOT FOMENTATIONS-** soak a tightly rolled-up towel in hot water, then quickly ring out excess water. Apply to sore and tired muscles for 5 minutes. Hot fomentations are most effective with chronic pain.

**CONTRAST HYDROTHERAPY-** alternating *cold and hot* applications for chronic conditions or *cool and warm* for newer conditions (sub-acute). Contrasts can be in the form of immersion baths or direct applications with ice packs and heating compresses. Alternate every 3-5 minutes several times.

**PARAFFIN BATHS-** delivers consistent heat to tense muscles and joints. Carefully melt 3-4 pounds of paraffin wax with 4 tablespoons of mineral oil to 180 degrees. Submerge the area to be treated into the wax (repeating several times) while allowing each layer to solidify in between dips. Wrap the area with plastic and insulate with a towel for half an hour.

**ELECTRIC HEATING PADS-** used to improve circulation and soothe tense muscles. For frequent use, avoid dry-heating pads. It is preferred to use a "deep moist" heating pad. Apply to stiff areas if no inflammation is present for 20-30 minutes.

**COLD AFFUSIONS-** a really simple cold affusion you can do is hold your hands, wrists, and forearms under cold tap water for 1-2 minutes every time you wash your hands. (Invigorates circulation)

**SAUNA-** involves intense heat up to 180 degrees using a small amount of water sprinkled over heated rocks. Originating from Finland, saunas are a great natural way to detoxify the body/skin through sweating. Following 5-15 minutes in the sauna, finish the treatment with a cool shower.

**WATER CONSUMPTION-** Using water therapeutically is not limited to external application. Keep your body hydrated and drink 8 glasses/day.



**STEAM INHALATION-** Place a pot/basin of boiling water on an insulated chair surface or table. Add drops of prescribed aromatherapy oils to the hot water. For example, to treat respiratory conditions and sinus congestion, eucalyptus/pine are used (10-20 drops total). After you've added the essential oils, drape a blanket or large towel over your head and inhale the aromatic fumes for 5-10 minutes.

If you wear contact lenses, remove them before starting this procedure. If there is excess mucous present in your respiratory tract, the steam will act as an expectorant- causing you to cough it up. Keep a garbage pail nearby for discarding mucous. Infants and the elderly should avoid this treatment as it can be fairly intense.

**For appointment bookings or more information, please call: (905) 897-8889**