



NATURAL SOLUTIONS

Clinical Kinesiology, Acupuncture, & (w)Holistic Healthcare

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Benefits of Contrast (Hot & Cold) Showers

Wouldn't it be nice if you could transform a simple frequent activity in your routine into a bona fide health benefit? If you can turn the hot and cold-water controls on your shower or bathtub you can create a new health benefit and assist your circulatory system, your respiratory system, your immune function, and your energy level.

It is likely that you are accustomed to the comfort of a warm or even hot bath or shower, whenever you would like. Besides basic hygienic purposes, a warm to hot bath or a shower can provide a moment for calm "me time" and muscle relaxation.

Changing up the water temperature and moving it away from warm or hot to cool or even cold provides notable health benefits that have been recorded over the centuries. Before you start shivering as you read this, recognize that several generations ago none of our ancestors had indoor bathrooms, not to mention water heaters, nor efficient ways to heat up bathwater.

Throughout most of history, bathing was accomplished with lake or stream water without the benefit of steamy heat. Reading about the history of bathing can be interesting. Take a look:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bathing>

In ancient times more well-to-do individuals could participate in therapeutic baths at public bath houses. The concept that intentionally soaking in hot water was for certain purposes and in cold water for others, was commonly accepted, along with the observed effects of alternating between the two. By the late 1700s these concepts and observations had grown to become the science and practice of hydrotherapy.

[Sebastian Anton Kneipp](#) was born in Bavaria, Germany in 1821. His goal was to become a priest. During his studies he acquired tuberculosis and struggled with his health condition. He read a book by Johann Siegemund Hahn, titled "Strength and Spice of Fresh Water in the Bodies of Men", published in 1743. This inspired him to plunge into the cold water of the Danube River two to three times per week, and he felt that this treatment cured his tuberculosis.

Father Kneipp helped many parishioners with his water therapy. He went on to write his own book on water therapy, [My Water Cure](#), first published in 1886 with many subsequent editions, and translations. This book became the go to resource for many Nature Therapy doctors of Europe.



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Father Kneipp would help people with various health conditions and have them soak the troubled limb or their entire body in room temperature to cold water with astounding results. He also was an herbalist and grew many herbs and recommended them to those who came to him for help.

His legacy lives on through numerous practitioners and their books.

- One such reference work which I can highly recommend is [*Healing with Water: Kneipp Hydrotherapy at Home*](#) by Giselle Roeder. Pick up a copy and see for yourself why this man's work has earned him his place as a true pioneer in modern natural health.
- [*Dr. John Henry Kellogg*](#) (1852 –1943) would later go on to research and practice a variety of hydrotherapeutic measures and other natural health techniques, and devised treatment protocols for countless health conditions and situations.
- This traditional hydrotherapy website is quite amazing to browse:
<https://www.traditionalhydrotherapy.com/>
- And an entire encyclopedia of such natural measures is available that you can use to look up diseases and health problems and relevant simple treatments that you can do at home:
<https://www.traditionalhydrotherapy.com/about.html#encyclo>

The use of hot and cold showers in a more simplified fashion, I believe, is relevant for *general* health purposes overall, and even specifically for toning the cardiovascular system.

As you research this topic, you will find contraindications and precautions telling people to avoid heat and cold if they have a cardiac or cardiovascular condition. Then, your research can find passages extolling the benefits of contrast baths or showers for your heart and cardiovascular system, even suggesting this therapy for controlling hypertension.

Do not allow yourself to be frightened, just obtain the education you need and then proceed carefully.
<https://asweatlife.com/2021/01/contrasting-showers/>

Be sure to see the additional information from Alive Magazine:

<https://www.alive.com/health/at-home-hot-and-cold-therapy/>



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Many people have used contrast showers, alternating hot and cold, to promote general health and well-being and to accentuate and promote the health of their heart and vascular system. Please watch this entire video by Wim Hof. It is titled [*Do This First Thing in The Morning to Never Get Sick Again!*](#) He probably has more experience with hot and cold therapy, the cold plunge, and relevant research than any other person living today.

Extreme variances in hot and cold exposure should be considered an advanced procedure for those who are truly ready for the challenge. The cold plunge or the polar bear experience when consciously applied may be beneficial but I do not advocate that for the average person who has not trained for such an adventure. However, anyone can benefit from watching this short video of the iconic [*Mr. Ice Man*](#) himself, Wim Hof.

Of course, subjecting your body to a new program of hot alternating with cold exposure needs to be approached carefully and wisely, but gently fluctuating the temperatures rather than dramatically doing so can have benefits for your blood vessels and keep them flexible and help prevent or delay arteriosclerotic buildup. Just remember to begin slowly, then add to your experience, and then nudge yourself forward to the edge of your tolerance as you feel is possible.

I personally have enjoyed the invigoration that comes from leaving the comfort of the 104-degree Hot Springs Pool in Glenwood Springs, Colorado and then rolling in the snow near it, and then jumping back into the hot water.

The contrast showers I am suggesting will be adjusted to your own preferences and you can gradually work into more extremes of heat and cold. Just begin with a comfortable warm to hot shower for two to three minutes, then turn the water flow to a cool temperature that is tolerable for 30 seconds or so. Then try to get even a little cooler momentarily, then go back to hot for a minute or so, and then back to cool to end your session. I am not advising you to be overly extreme, AT FIRST, but to comfortably expand your comfort zone. Progressively increase your self-challenge and simultaneously increase the benefits as you gain skill and comfort with contrast showers. Only you can control the amount and duration of your exposure, and only you can improve your vascular function.

I do hope you can bring a little chill into your life for good benefit.

May you enjoy both ends of the temperature spectrum with great benefit.

Dr. Susan L Levy, DC