

the healthy swimmer



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Hydrotherapy Promotes Health, Healing

Water has been used as therapy for centuries. In ancient Greece and Rome, regular trips to the gymnasiums and bathhouses were part of the routine for good health and hygiene. Hydrotherapy—the use of water to maintain health or promote healing— became popular in Germany during the 19th century, when Vincenz Priessnitz and Father Sebastian Kneipp each established hydrotherapy centers, using steam, ice, hot, warm and cold water in a variety of ways.

Hydrotherapy can be as basic as applying ice to a sprained ankle, or using steam to unclog sinuses, or as complex as taking multiple immersion baths, alternating between waters of varying temperatures. These therapies all have something in common—they affect blood circulation in the body.

In general, cold temperatures constrict blood vessels, numb the nerves and slow respiration. Hot temperatures have the opposite effect, dilating blood vessels and increasing circulation. Contrast hydrotherapies usually involve alternating heat with cold and are used primarily to stimulate local circulation. One 30-minute contrast bath might consist of four minutes hot and one minute cold, repeated six times.

If you are interested in trying hydrotherapy, select a practitioner who suits your individual needs. Primary care physicians, chiropractors and physical therapists typically treat sports-related injuries. Physicians and gastroenterologists treat other types of internal conditions. Licensed naturopathic doctors typically administer complementary methods of hydrotherapy treatment. <<<

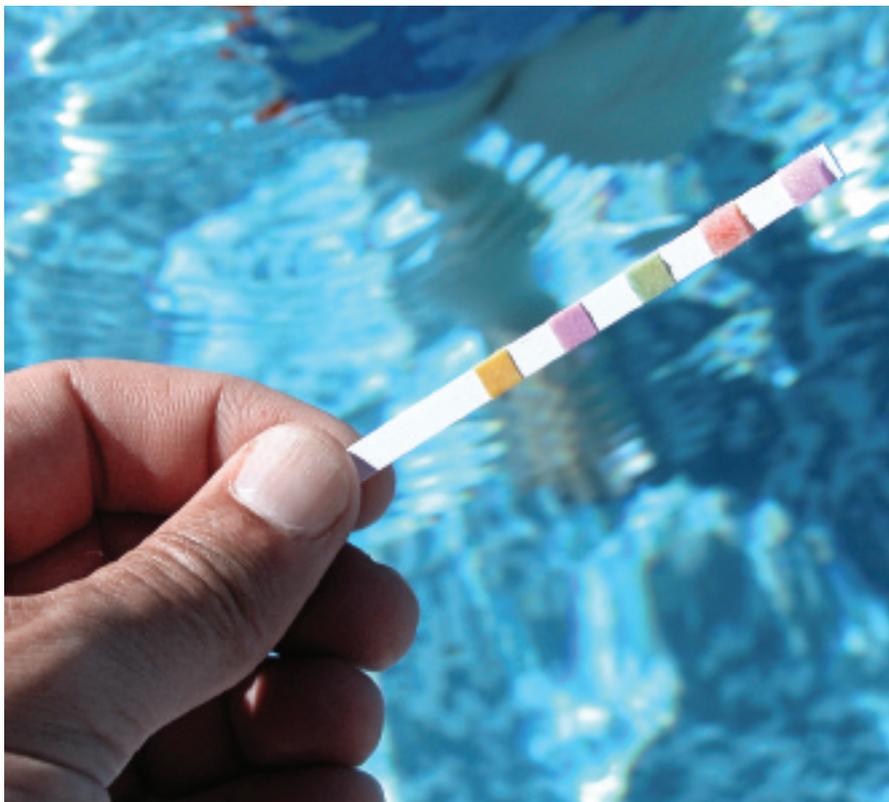
>>> For additional information about hydrotherapy, visit the Holistic Online web site at www.holistic-online.com/hydrotherapy.htm.

Prevent Recreational Water Illness

Recreational water illness is spread by swallowing, breathing or coming into contact with contaminated water from swimming pools, spas, hot tubs, decorative water fountains, lakes, rivers or oceans. According to Medicine.net, recreational water illnesses (RWIs) can cause a wide variety of symptoms including skin, ear, respiratory, eye and wound infections. The most commonly reported RWI is diarrhea. Germs such as Crypto (short for Cryptosporidium), Giardia, Shigella, and E. coli O157:H7 can cause diarrheal RWIs.

The Centers for Disease Control Division of Parasitic Diseases' web site provides additional information for swimmers, pool operators and public health professionals to improve the swimming experience by raising awareness about the spread of recreational water illnesses. Healthy swimming behaviors are recommended to protect people from RWIs and help stop germs from getting in the pool in the first place. These healthy swimming behaviors include recommendations for general hygiene, tips to avoid the spread of germs and advice for parents with small children. <<<

>>> More detailed information is available at www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/6_pleas.htm.



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Exercise May Slow Prostate Cancer

New research shows that vigorous physical activity may slow the progression of prostate cancer in older men. But to have a positive effect, the research team from Harvard's School of Public Health found that men must exercise vigorously at least three hours each week. Results of the 14-year study, reported in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, included data from 47,620 men in the United States.

Although previous research suggested a link between physical activity and lower risk of prostate cancer, a strong connection had not been shown. In the Harvard study, which was

conducted between 1986 and 2000, each subject was asked to provide details about what types of exercise they did, and what volume. During the 14 years, 2,892 new cases of prostate cancer were diagnosed among study subjects—482 of those cases were advanced.

Researchers concluded that men aged 65 and older who did regular, vigorous exercise showed an approximate 70 percent lower risk of advanced or terminal prostate cancer. No similar association was found in younger men. <<<
>>> **For more information, visit the Prostate Cancer Foundation at www.prostatecancerfoundation.org.**

Few Americans Follow Guidelines for Healthy Lifestyle

According to a recent report in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, only 3 percent of adults in the United States follow all four healthy lifestyle characteristics, as defined in a study led by Mathew J. Reeves of Michigan State University and Ann P. Rafferty of the Michigan Department of Community Health. The study focused on four primary elements of a healthy lifestyle: smoking activity, weight, fruit and vegetable consumption and exercise.

"We looked at national representative data for 2000," reports Reeves, an assistant professor of epidemiology at Michigan State. "We wanted to see the proportion of adults that met the definition for a healthy lifestyle." The data included information from the 2000 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System—an annual survey of the nation's health.

Reeves and Rafferty found that 76 percent of the people surveyed were nonsmokers, 40.1 percent maintained a healthy weight, 23.3 percent said they ate at least five fruits and vegetables daily and 22.2 percent said they exercised at least five times a week.

According to the report, the data illustrated that very few adults in the U.S. follow a healthy lifestyle—as defined by the combination of the four healthy lifestyle characteristics. The study also found that no subgroup followed the combination to a level remotely consistent with clinical or public health recommendations.

"If you want to say, 'how can I best maximize my quality of life, my longevity, reduce my disease risk and reduce medical expenses?'"—you would lead this sort of healthy lifestyle," Reeves says. "Don't smoke, don't be overweight, exercise regularly and eat right—it's exactly what your grandmother has been telling you for 50 years." <<<

>>> **The American Academy of Family Physicians can tell you more about staying healthy. Visit their web site at <http://familydoctor.org/086.xml>.**

More Insights on Predicting and Treating Alzheimer's

Simple memory tests may accurately predict the onset of Alzheimer's disease as far out as five to 10 years, according to a new study from Canada's Sunnybrook and Women's Health Sciences Centre. Previous studies were only successful at predicting the onset of Alzheimer's two years in advance.

The 10-year study included approximately 1,000 Canadians, aged 65 or older. One particular test called "delayed verbal recall" was found to predict which participants would develop Alzheimer's disease within the decade—and the test was found to be 70 percent accurate. The test involved a list of 15 simple, everyday words, such as "moon" and "parent." Participants went over the list several times, and shortly after were asked to recall as many of the words as possible, with recall levels recorded and analyzed.

In other news, the Alzheimer's Association reports that mental, physical and social workouts are the best ways to lower the risk of developing this debilitating disease. The association has developed a workshop program as a reminder of what studies have shown: people who exercise regularly, who have social connections, who have mentally challenging jobs or hobbies, who eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and who keep a healthy weight are at lower risk of the disease.

Recommended in the program are mentally challenging tasks such as memorizing a telephone number and recalling it later, puzzles, word games and even playing or coaching sports that involve strategy. <<<

>>> **Detailed information is available from the Alzheimer's Association online at www.alz.org/maintainyourbrain/overview.asp. To start work on those memory exercises, check out the Sudoku puzzle provided by the USA Today Puzzle Society at <http://puzzles.usatoday.com/sudoku/archive/2005/07/13/>.**