



“MEDICAL BENEFITS OF STEAM BATH”

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Abstract

A steam bath is a method of hydrotherapy treatment modality, where the patient is exposed to moist heat, but not the head. The physiological changes experienced when taking a steam bath are very similar to those experienced when exercising or when suffering from a fever. Whenever the body is exposed to a challenging environment, it attempts to regain homeostasis through a series of reactions that lead to peripheral vasodilation and decrease in peripheral resistance. It has been advised for patients, as well as normal healthy individuals for the purpose of health promotion. Further research is urgently needed to demonstrate the potential benefits of steam bathing in a variety of health condition.

Key words- steam bath, hydrotherapy, homeostasis, peripheral vasodilation,

Introduction

Since ancient times, steam baths have been known to help relax individuals and improve their health. The body is detoxified of toxic chemicals by steam saunas in medical clinics. The steam bath helps to change the blood chemistry, which leads to a detoxification process (1) With weight loss, blood chemistry changes include decreased cholesterol and triglyceride levels, as well as increased high density lipoprotein levels. It is important for the skin to play a role in controlling and removing toxins from the body. We live in a toxic world, and we need to enhance our bodies' detoxification abilities. The incidence of metabolic syndromes such as diabetes and hypercholesterolemia has increased due to lifestyle changes and exposure to environmental toxins.(2)

Definition

A steam bath is a type of hydrotherapy treatment, in which the body gets exposed to moist heat except for the head.(3) Steam baths are very much like exercise or fever in terms of their physiological effects.(4)

- Temperature –110F to 130F with 100% humidity
- Duration -10 to 15 minutes

Apparatus –The apparatus has a steam generating system including a heated, inclined evaporating surface over which heated liquid flows to cause of the evaporation of the liquid, any known evaporated liquid such as water is collected, reheated and re- circulated the steam generating system is part of module, which include the floor of the cabinet.(5)

Procedure: The patient should drink 1 or 2 glasses of water and take a cold shower before entering the steam room. Immediately after the bath, a quick cold shower is taken. A glass of cold lemon juice soon after the cold shower acts as a refresher. The patient should relax for 30 to 45 minutes.(6)

Precautions: Sometimes, during the bath, one may feel giddy or uneasy. In such cases the patient should immediately be taken out and a glass of cold water given and his head washed with cold water. Sufficient rest should be given until the unpleasant symptoms disappear.(6)

Indication- Steam room is a powerful treatment to eliminate the morbid matter from the surface of the skin, a condition sometimes known as "constipation of the skin". It helps in treating cases of Arthritis (Osteo and Rheumatoid), Gout, uric acid problems and obesity. Steam room is helpful in all forms of chronic toxemias. It also relieves neuralgias such as Sciatica. facial and spinal neuralgias, functional disorders of the spinal cord etc. It is also recommended in cases of chronic Nephritis migraine, malarial neuralgia etc.(6)

Contra-Indications: This bath should not be given to very weak patients, cardiac patients and those suffering from high blood pressure and fever.(6)

General information about Steam bath

The body attempts to re-establish homeostasis when it is exposed to challenging environments by causing peripheral vasodilation and a decrease in peripheral resistance.(7) Steam baths have been known throughout history for helping with relaxation, improving health and promoting well-being. Steam saunas are used in medical clinics to detoxify the body of toxic chemicals.(8)

Discussion

Probable mode of action- A steam bath is a great way to benefit from overheating therapy. "An artificially induced fever leads to profuse therapeutic sweating." A brief 15 minute steam bath session can eliminate as much fat-stored chemicals as it would take the kidneys 24 hours to eliminate.(8) The speed of metabolic changes in the human body is mainly determined by the functions of the nervous and endocrine systems and the enzymes in peripheral tissues. Steam bath can cause increase metabolic rate by energizing the sympatho-adrenal system, changing the endocrine system, and increasing the body's internal temperature. Hormones influence lipid metabolism primarily by regulating the rate of enzyme synthesis and the activity of enzymes. One of the study concluded that, steam baths showed significant changes in lipid levels in male and female subjects, which could be explained by hyperthermia and hyperactivity of ACTH, cortisone and etc.(9)(10)(11)

Conclusion- steam bath, "sensible perspiration" is created by heating the body. Whenever the peripheral temperature increases, the rate of metabolic reactions increases, resulting in the body breaking down fat tissue for energy. Sweating is part of the complex thermoregulatory process of the body. Hypothalamus activates mechanisms for cooling the body, including skin vasodilatation and sweating.

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