

HYDROTHERAPY

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: What is Hydrotherapy	
Definition	5
History	5
Medical Uses	8
Modern Benefits	8
Why Hydrotherapy Works	8
Scope of Practice	9
Chapter 2: Modalities	
Packings	11
Hot Air and Steam Baths	11
General Baths	12
Local Baths	14
Dry Hydrotherapy	14
Hydrothermal Therapy	17
Aquatic Bodywork	17
Traction	18
Animal Hydrotherapy	18
Chapter 3: Incorporating Hydrotherapy Into the Massage Practice	
Cleanliness	20
Safety	21
Pricing	22
Rest Afterwards	23
Contraindications	23
.....General	23
.....For Using Heat	24
.....For Using Cold	25
.....For Continuing Session	25

CHAPTER 1:

WHAT IS HYDROTHERAPY?

Definition

Hydrotherapy is

“the use of water, ice, steam, and hot and cold temperatures to improve or maintain health”¹

“the use of water in any of its forms (solid, liquid, vapor) for the treatment of disease or the maintenance of health; mostly influencing nervous system, circulatory system and the skin.”²

History

The Greeks and Romans, it is said, believed “fervently” in hydrotherapy.³ In the 5th century BC, Hippocrates wrote about his cures using hydrotherapy and one of the most famous Roman hydrotherapy spas is Aquae Sulis built in AD 43. However, many other ancient cultures made hydrotherapy a significant part of their lives, including the Hindus, Persians, Hebrews, Chinese, Japanese and American Indians.

That said, it is a safe assumption that when primitive man (or woman) could avail themselves of a hot spring they instinctually eased their aching body into it.

In more modern times, Sebastian Kneipp, a Bavarian priest (some say monk) is often said to be the father of hydrotherapy.⁴ (One source says he developed his interest after being cured of tuberculosis through hydrotherapy.⁵) However, beginning his work about 1860,⁶ he stood on the shoulders of many others.

More than 150 years before Kneipp, Sir John Floyer, a doctor in England, was writing about the use of cold and hot baths.⁷ Dr. JS Hahn of Silesia (now largely in Poland) wrote a book on the subject in 1738.⁸ The English Dr. James Currie advocated cold water treatments in a 1797 pamphlet.⁹

The towering figure before Kneipp was a peasant farmer (not a doctor) Vincenz Priessnitz (1799-1851) in what was then Austria.¹⁰ His success with hydrotherapy, among other techniques, irritated local doctors who complained he was an imposter. Their gripes were squashed by the government; Priessnitz had cured the Emperor's brother. The farmer eventually trained doctors in his techniques. If number of cures and publicity were the measure of who "founded" hydrotherapy, Priessnitz would probably get the nod.

So why is Kneipp so honored? He licensed his friend to sell products using his name. The resulting German company, the Kneipp Group, now sells products worldwide.¹¹ Thus the priest may be getting more exposure for the "father of hydrotherapy" position.

Jane Austen writes of people going to Bath, England to take the water cure in the hot springs (continuing what the Romans did there).¹² She was in the city twice on long visits and lived there from 1801 to 1806. A hospital utilizing the water was begun in 1738.

Hydrotherapy went mainstream in the 1840s, spreading across England, Germany and France.¹³ By 1850, the United States (then much smaller than it is today) probably had 100 institutions offering hydrotherapy;¹⁴ that exploded into hundreds in the next fifteen years.¹⁵

Turkish baths hit England in 1857; 600 would eventually open (only 14 remain in the United Kingdom today.)¹⁶ The United States got its first Turkish bath much later, in 1863 (in Brooklyn).

RMS *Titanic* had Turkish baths aboard when she sank in 1912.¹⁷ They were for first class passengers only. James Cameron got a remote controlled vehicle into the remains of the baths in 2005; many of the green and blue tiles were still up. A surviving ticket to the *Titanic*'s Turkish baths sold for more than a thousand dollars in 1990.¹⁸

Hydrotherapy has a presidential connection. Franklin Roosevelt, suffering from he believed to be polio, was convinced of the benefits of hydrotherapy. In 1926 he founded a hydrotherapy center in Warm Springs, Georgia which still exists more than eighty years later.¹⁹

He visited Warm Springs 16 times during his 12 years as president.²⁰ It was in his home near the center, the Little White House, where he died, in 1945.²¹

Medical Uses

Hydrotherapy was used to treat typhus beginning in 1860-1870.²² During the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), hydrotherapy was part of the treatment for hyperpyrexia. It has been used in cases of alcoholism²³, fevers and weight loss.

Modern drugs since the 1950s have sidelined hydrotherapy as a glamour therapy.²⁴ It is still used for arthritis, spinal cord injuries, burns, spasticity, stroke or paralysis, and in physical therapy.

Modern Benefits

Massage therapists cannot, of course, diagnose and treat ailments. But hydrotherapy is said to have many general benefits:

- ✓ Improves well-being²⁵
- ✓ Improves muscle tone²⁶
- ✓ Energizes body²⁷
- ✓ Increases fertility²⁸
- ✓ Assists in removal of waste products²⁹
- ✓ Relieves pain³⁰
- ✓ Relieves stress³¹
- ✓ Pleasure³²
- ✓ Prevents headaches³³

Why Hydrotherapy Works

“While the physiological mechanisms were initially poorly understood, the therapeutic benefits have long been recognized.”³⁴ Now it is realized that blood flow changes (vasodilation--via hot water--and vasoconstriction--when cold water is used) are the mechanism for hydrotherapy’s benefits.³⁵

Water is an excellent non-toxic medium for conducting heat and cold. It can maintain a desired temperature for long periods and in some cases, such as geothermal hot springs, almost indefinitely. Also, water can be applied in a multitude of forms. For example, it can be used as a strong spray to stimulate tissues or a soft mist for inhalation.

Scope of Practice

If the therapist is not trained in hydrotherapy, the techniques are outside the scope of practice.

This means additional training is required to add hydrotherapy to the massage practice. This is similar to learning aromatherapy before implementing it with clients.

This class is a survey of the subject, which could lead to more study if the therapist decides to include hydrotherapy at work.

The NCBTMB's Code of Ethics IV is interpreted by some to require the therapist to tell the client something like, "Hydrotherapy is not covered by my massage certification but I am also trained in hydrotherapy."³⁶ At least, if the client is relying on the certification as a guarantee of expertise, the therapist should be careful that the "color of authority" of certification does not embrace hydrotherapy.³⁷

Acknowledge the limitations of and contraindications for massage and bodywork and refer clients to appropriate health professionals.

--NCBTMB Code of Ethics IV

Chapter Summary

- ❖ Hydrotherapy uses water to improve or maintain health.
- ❖ Hydrotherapy is very old, dating to at least ancient Greece.
- ❖ The modern popularity of hydrotherapy began in the 1840s.
- ❖ The massage therapist may need additional training to incorporate hydrotherapy.

CHAPTER 2:

MODALITIES

Hydrotherapy is expressed across a wide range of modalities.

Colonic hydrotherapy is commonly practiced in massage establishments. 68% of massage businesses offering hydrotherapy include colonic hydrotherapy, according to one study.³⁸ However, the NCBTMB officially does not allow colonic hydrotherapy in continuing education so it is not discussed in this book.

Packings

Packing can involve a wet sheet over the body with dry blankets packed over it.³⁹ The sheet may be either hot or cold but is well wrung out.⁴⁰

Or a specific area of the body can be addressed with a compress.⁴¹ A hot compress will stimulate circulation and can facilitate absorption of skin products.⁴² The water the compress is soaked in can be prepared with herbs.⁴³

Hot air and steam baths

A famous example of this method is the Turkish bath.⁴⁴ A more modern instance is the sauna.⁴⁵

A steam bath causes sweating which, it is claimed, detoxifies the body. Uses for this method include weight loss, stress reduction and relaxation. Typically this is done prior to a massage, as it loosens the muscles.⁴⁶ This method is not appropriate for clients with cardiac pathology.⁴⁷

Two or three steam baths or saunas of fifteen to twenty minutes each may be taken in succession but it is important to cool off between each bath. A new session should *not* be started if the body is already warm.⁴⁸

General Baths

General baths involve the immersion of the whole body in water (as opposed to local baths which just bathe a particular part of the body). Immersion in a tub can be enhanced with whirlpools. Sometimes a therapist directs a jet of pressurized water under the surface at the client's muscles.⁴⁹ The hose is four to six inches from the client.

All sorts of things can be added to the water:

- Epsom salts (reported to draw out toxins and calm the nervous system)⁵⁰
- Sea salts (some say these detoxify and relax the bather)⁵¹
- Carbon dioxide bubbles (said to slow down heart activity and relieve stress)⁵²
- Aroma oils and essences⁵³

- Air bubbles (the tickling of the bubbles is reported to be relaxing)⁵⁴
- Bubble bath. (One manufacturer notes that a whirlpool will generate many more bubbles than an ordinary bath so add less of the product.)⁵⁵
- Bath oil (may soften and nourish the skin. If the bath oil contains petals, be sure to use a hair trap when emptying the bath to avoid clogging the drain.)⁵⁶

A possible downside to use bath additives: one manufacturer recommends that a whirlpool be “purged” after each use of additives. The purge includes adding 2 packets of the manufacturer’s cleaning material into the water, running the pool for 5 to 10 minutes and then completely draining it.⁵⁷

Additives are not limited to the water. Aromatherapy can be combined with hydrotherapy. Various scents are believed to improve life or help specific problems. For a good introduction to this service, see Shirley Henderson, *Aromatherapy*, 2007. This text can be read for free online at <http://mansfieldfc.com/massage/1/aroma/toc.html> .

Australian spas often use sea water in their baths.⁵⁸ (Presumably they do something to clean up the water first.)

General baths include showers⁵⁹ and hot tubs.⁶⁰ Fiberglass has changed hot tub seating from the traditional bench to options including lounge chairs

where the bather can recline in the water and seating for persons of different heights.⁶¹

Local Baths

This term is used when the bath is for a particular part of the body rather than the whole body.⁶² Examples are baths for the spine, head or foot.

Contrast baths can put the hands in hot water for 2 minutes, then into cold for 1 minute.⁶³ This cycle repeated twice more.

Paraffin baths involve melting paraffin and letting it cool to 125 degrees (check with a candy thermometer).⁶⁴ Wash the hand or foot, dip it into the paraffin, being careful not to touch the sides of the container. Lift the hand or foot and wait until the paraffin has finished dripping. Repeat 5 to 7 times, then wrap in plastic and cover with a towel for 20 minutes. Peel the paraffin off. (Paraffin is flammable so use with care. Don't use a paraffin bath when open sores or cuts are present.)

Dry Hydrotherapy

Hydrotherapy does not necessarily mean the client gets wet. Devices are available where the client sits or lies completely clothed and protected by a waterproof barrier as "streams of pressurized heated water" are directed against the body.⁶⁵

It may be possible to use an unlicensed employee to administer dry hydrotherapy since the client is never touched. However, the ordinance or statute governing massage may have a definition broad enough to include dry hydrotherapy.

For example, Florida's statute reads:

Massage means the manipulation of the soft tissues of the human body with the hand, foot, arm, or elbow, whether or not such manipulation is aided by hydrotherapy, including colonic irrigation, or thermal therapy; any electrical or mechanical device; or the application to the human body of a chemical or herbal preparation⁶⁶

It is possible to construe this law as regulating manipulation by the therapist's "hand, foot, arm, or elbow" and that all the list elements only apply when the therapist's hand etc. is in use. In other words, when the therapist's hand etc. is not in use, the device is not regulated. Thus, dry hydrotherapy would not be controlled under that interpretation and an unlicensed employee could help the client.

Whittier, California, on the other hand, has an ordinance which is not based on the therapist's hand:

Massage, massage therapy, bodywork" means any method of treating the external parts of the human body for remedial, health,

hygienic, relaxation or any other reason or purpose, whether by means of pressure on, friction against or stroking, kneading, tapping, pounding, vibrating, rubbing or any other manner of touching external parts of the human body with the hands, or with the aid of any mechanical or electrical apparatus or appliance, with or without supplementary aids such as rubbing alcohol, liniment, antiseptic, oil, powder, cream, ointment or other similar preparations commonly used in this type of business or trade.⁶⁷

“With the hands, or with the aid of any mechanical ... apparatus” brings dry hydrotherapy within the ordinance, requiring a licensed therapist to supervise the procedure.

If a manager believes the local law allows a non-licensed person to supervise dry hydrotherapy and wants to use such a person (perhaps because of lower wages), it would be best to check with the local police department. Sometimes a police department's view of the law differs markedly from the law's language.

A friend, for example, once called the police because a neighbor's party was vibrating his walls. A police sergeant came out and strangely explained how this did not violate the local noise ordinance. The next day, the friend (a law student) actually read the city's law. Nothing the sergeant said was accurate and legally he should have intervened.

Hydrothermal therapy

Hydrothermal refers to hydrotherapy that uses heat.⁶⁸ Sometimes hydrothermal is used interchangeably with cold applications to reduce swelling. The most common applications are for muscle and joint pain, congestion of the respiratory and digestive systems and stress and nervousness.

Aquatic Bodywork

In the modalities discussed so far, hydrotherapy is separate from massage. The client is alone in the bath. Any massage is separate.

Aquatic bodywork, however, combines the two: the therapist is in the water with the client and performs massage there.⁶⁹ This form began in 1980 when Howard Dull of Northern California began floating his Zen Shiatsu students in warm water.⁷⁰ Within 25 years, Dull's school had trained 5,000 aquatic bodywork practitioners.⁷¹

The Worldwide Aquatic Bodywork Association registers trained “providers” of the modality.⁷² The Association has a Code of Ethics for practitioners.

The client is typically in a bathing suit for aquatic bodywork.⁷³ This complies with the draping National

certificants are required to use (NCBTMB Standards of Practice I.j.)

Because the ears may go in and out of the water, it may be more pleasant for the client if earplugs are worn. (At least until someone starts offering clients a waterproof Ipod.) If the client, wearing earplugs, is unable to hear, the therapist has a greater responsibility for the client's safety.

The physical contact between therapist and client is greater in aquatic bodywork than in massage. The therapist is holding the client much or all of the time.⁷⁴ The physical boundaries which normally inhibit transference⁷⁵ are lacking. The therapist may wish to be aware of this issue.

Traction

Here mechanical devices and weights are used to stretch the body in the water. This is more common in the medical setting but a hotel in Germany offers it for consumers.⁷⁶

Animal Hydrotherapy

Animal hydrotherapy is offered primarily for dogs and horses.⁷⁷ A school mentions cats but one wonders if a cat would go along. England has a Canine Hydrotherapy Association.⁷⁸ This group requires members to consult a veterinary surgeon before treating an animal.⁷⁹

Benefits for the animal are said to include relaxation, pain relief, increased confidence and better balance and coordination.⁸⁰

In 1990 Brian Scott of Australia designed a fiberglass tub for horses.⁸¹ The main concern in equine hydrotherapy appears to be medical—curing leg injuries. The water is kept quite cold (39 degrees Fahrenheit in one example) and salts are added.

Chapter Summary

- ❖ Hydrotherapy may be expressed in a number of modalities.
- ❖ Some of these involve the whole body; others just a part or parts of the body.
- ❖ In one kind of hydrotherapy, the client doesn't even get wet.

CHAPTER 3:
INCORPORATING HYDROTHERAPY
INTO THE MASSAGE PRACTICE

Hydrotherapy can blend well with a massage practice's mission of providing relaxation, pain relief, and well being to clients. Here are some considerations to be taken into account in implementing hydrotherapy.

Cleanliness

Clients should wash and rinse themselves before entering the hydrotherapy tub or pool.⁸² They should be clean and free of soap prior to entering. Talcum powder should not be used as it makes the floor slippery and dangerous for others.⁸³

Warm, wet conditions may promote the spread of various diseases. These include athlete's foot,⁸⁴ meningitis,⁸⁵ acanthamoeba,⁸⁶ Legionella bacteria,⁸⁷ and herpes simplex virus.⁸⁸

The danger of spreading infection may be lessened by restricting the pool from clients who have open cuts, lesions or sores.⁸⁹

The Centers for Disease Control recommend draining and cleaning hydrotherapy tubs after each client's

use.⁹⁰ Equipment, surfaces and components should be disinfected with an EPA-registered following the manufacturer's instructions.

One manufacturer details the between-clients cleaning like this:⁹¹

- ✓ Fill the tub with clear water until the level is above all the jets.
- ✓ Add product at proper dilution.
- ✓ Turn on jets to circulate product. Antifoam may be needed.
- ✓ Turn off jets and allow to sit for 30 seconds.
- ✓ Clean surfaces inside tub with brush.
- ✓ Turn jets on until they circulate product.
- ✓ Drain tub.
- ✓ Refill tub as before.
- ✓ Run jets for up to 30 seconds to rinse.
- ✓ Refill tub.

Safety

As mentioned above, additional training may be necessary to offer hydrotherapy in a massage practice.

Current insurance coverage will need to be reviewed and possibly enhanced to include hydrotherapy.

Water temperature should not exceed 104 degrees Fahrenheit.⁹² Deaths have occurred at 110 degrees Fahrenheit. The operator of the hydrotherapy device needs to know how to monitor and adjust temperature.

The risk of slip and fall injuries increases around hydrotherapy equipment.⁹³ The operator should use features (for example, hand rails) and procedures to minimize the problem.

Pricing

When multiple services are being offered, it is important to clearly distinguish the choices, and what each includes and costs. This complies with NCBTMB's Standard of Practice IV.k: "display/discuss a schedule of fees in advance of the session that is clearly understood by the client or potential client."

For example, "fusion massage" might be offered for \$75. What does fusion mean? A better practice would be to present "fusion massage (15 minutes hydrotherapy, 15 minutes massage) \$75." If each service is also offered separately, then there is no chance the client is buying something they didn't fully understand.

While most clients have a general idea what to expect from a massage, many may be unfamiliar with hydrotherapy. The therapist may need to take a little extra time to explain what will occur.

Being unfamiliar with hydrotherapy, partway through the session the client may decide this is not working. The client retains the right to discontinue a session (NCBTMB Code of Ethics XI). Possibly the therapist's best

approach in that event is to step away from the client and verbally acknowledge the termination.⁹⁴

Further discussion, if any, about the early ending of the session should probably be conducted away from the treatment area.⁹⁵ Having the refund policy clearly posted will make things simpler for everyone if a client ends the session early.

Rest Afterwards

The client may be drowsy after hydrotherapy⁹⁶ and should be allowed to rest before departing.⁹⁷ One source recommends resting for at least as long as the hydrotherapy session lasted.⁹⁸

Contraindications

There are many reasons hydrotherapy may be inappropriate. A good way to test for these conditions is to ask questions on the intake questionnaire. Generally a hydrotherapist will not be treating patients with some of the illness on the questionnaire, however, they should be asked for professional reasons.

General Contraindications⁹⁹

- Broken skin
- Fever
- Heavy cold
- Infection

- Skin rash
- Heart disease
- Unstable blood pressure
- High blood pressure
- Circulation disorder
- Lung disease
- Advanced kidney failure
- Advanced liver disease
- Acute arthritis
- Phlebitis
- Gangrene
- Raynaud's phenomenon
- Chilblain
- Permanent vasomotor paralysis
- Wounds or lesions
- Injuries which could be aggravated by the agitation of the water
- Neuropathy
- Pregnancy
- Implanted medical devices such as pacemakers or pumps
- Nut allergies (if bath oils used contain nut oil, which is very common)¹⁰⁰
- Obesity¹⁰¹

Contraindications for Using Heat¹⁰²

- Acute inflammation
- Fever
- Directly over heart
- Diabetes
- Elderly (long full-body treatments contraindicated)

- Young children (long full-body treatments contraindicated)
- Recent alcohol consumption (the theory is that both alcohol and hot hydrotherapy raise the body temperature; the combination might raise it too much)¹⁰³

*Contraindications for Using Cold*¹⁰⁴

- Do not use cold on abdomen if diarrhea is present
- Spasmed muscles
- Hyperthyroidism
- Bladder or rectal irritation (cold foot baths are contraindicated)
- Sciatica (cold foot baths are contraindicated)
- Pelvic inflammation (cold foot baths are contraindicated)
- Rheumatism in toes or ankles (cold foot baths are contraindicated)

*Contraindications for Continuing Session*¹⁰⁵

- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Headache
- Hyperventilation
- Fainting
- Palpitations
- Shivering
- Skin irritation
- Skin sensitivity

Hydrotherapy can offer a great addition to a massage practice with wonderful benefits for the client. It will require an increased skill level from the therapist. But having a Jacuzzi or hot tub might be a nice way for the therapist to relax after work.

Chapter Summary

- ❖ Hydrotherapy requires additional efforts to maintain cleanliness and safety.
- ❖ The client should rest after a hydrotherapy treatment.
- ❖ The therapist should check for contraindications (possibly through an intake interview form) before offering client hydrotherapy.

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