What is Hydrotherapy?

Hydro: Water

Therapy: Cure

The scientific application of water in the treatment of disease

Why use water?

Inexpensive

Versatility

Easy to apply

Non-toxic and safe

Found nearly everywhere

Ideal for heat transfer

Certain substances (such as wood, paper, cloth, plastic, etc.) conduct heat poorly. Other substances (such as water, silver and other metals) conduct heat very readily. For this reason, these material that are highly conductive feel colder or hotter at the same temperature than do substances which are poor conductors of heat. *Home Remedies* 52, 53

Water has 27 times greater capacity for conducting heat than has air. Therefore, one can step into a refrigerator at 32° with the skin bare and suffer little discomfort. However, step into a tub of water at 32° you would feel a shock because of the much greater ability of water to conduct heat from the surface of the body.

Since water is a good conductor, there is marked cooling of the body by an ice rub because actual heat transfers from the body to the ice, being stored in the melted water as latent heat. The same thing occurs in the wet sheet pack with evaporation, since heat is transferred from the body to the water as it vaporizes from the surface. For this reason, is rarely necessary to use ice, since water in evaporation carries away a large quantities of heat form the body.

The important thing to understand is that water has great heat conveying and tactile properties which cause effects on the vascular system, the nervous system, the muscles, the metabolism, WBC, immune system, endocrines and other tissues and organs. Ibid.

“The healing process involves only the following known factors: blood and lymph vessels, nerve stimuli, leukocytes, connective tissue, plasma proteins, biochemical mechanisms, and immune properties of living cells. Therefore, it has become progressively more clear that it is only those remedies that assist, stimulate, remove impediments, and direct nature in her efforts to throw off an offending agent and utilize the defense mechanisms of the body that can be classed as true remedies.”

Home Remedies p. VI

Heat Increases:

* Pulse and Respiration
* Blood Volume and Vessel Size
* White/Red Blood Cell
* Nervous System Responses
* Perspiration

Cold Decreases:

* Muscle Action
* Constricts Blood Vessels
* Congestion of Effected Area
* Pulse and Respiration
* Pain

Alternating HOT and COLD speeds the bodies healing ability by increasing:

* Nutrients
* Red Blood Cells (oxygen carriers)
* White Blood Cells (immune system)

to congested and/or diseased areas

“The skin is intimately related to the central nervous system through millions of nerve endings of the skin. It is primarily through the skin that hydrotherapy produces its powerful physiologic actions.”

*Journal of the AMA*

Treatment Room

* Neat and orderly
* 75 to 85 degrees
* Protect bedding/furniture
* Free of drafts
* No bright lights
* Leave orderly

General:

* Have prayer with the patient.
* Keep the treatment room warm and free from drafts.
* Do not give the patient water to drink during the treatment (cause cramping, interrupt treatment to urinate).
* Cold towels and washcloths should not be “soppy” wet. Water dripping over ears and down the body can be uncomfortable and also may lead to chilling.
* The wetter a towel or washcloth is left after wringing from ice water, the colder it feels.
* Be careful not to burn the patient. If the patient says the fomentation, water, or steam is too hot, add more protection, cool the water, lower the steam, etc. Each person is different and has a different heat tolerance.
* Be especially careful with thin or aged persons and children. They can generally take less heat.
* Be careful not to spread infections. Wash your hands before and after treatments. Wear a mask if you or the patient are contagious.
* Do not apply fomentations where there is danger of hemorrhage or suspected malignancy.
* If a treatment is not skillfully given the patient’s condition can be worsened.
* Clean equipment with bleach or another disinfectant after each treatment.
* “The number of our lady physicians should be increased. Care should be taken that lady nurses have the care of lady patients, and gentleman nurses of gentleman patients.” (PC 2)

The Patient:

* The patient should be rested before a treatment. If he has just had exercise, let him rest long enough to reach his resting heart rate for at least ten minutes before his treatment.
* Avoid giving hydrotherapy immediately after the patient has eaten a meal.
* Plan ahead and assemble all necessary articles
* Pray with them
* Explain procedure
* Must be warm before beginning
* Remember patients modesty
* Make your changes quickly, but do not appear to be rushed
* Comfortable at all times
* Keep patient warm
* Keep appropriate body parts cool i.e. head
* Don’t be too talkative
* Constantly observe the effects of the treatment
* Dry all treated parts thoroughly
* Stay with the patient, or within easy calling distance.
* Treatment reaction complete
* Allow time for post-treatment rest

Possible Problems During Treatment

* The patient cannot warm up enough or sweat: Give warm water to drink, apply more covers, place a fomentation between the buttocks and hot foot bath.
* Hyperventilation occurs when the patient is losing too much carbon dioxide by breathing too rapidly or too deeply. He may feel light headed and experience numbness and tingling in his extremities. Have him breath into a paper bag until the tingling disappears.
* Dizziness, faintness, or weakness can be caused by a sudden drop in blood pressure or blood sugar. Take the pulse and the blood pressure. If the blood pressure is 80/60 or below, discontinue heat applications, elevate the legs, and give a salty broth to drink.
* When giving a treatment to a patient with diarrhea, be sure he has adequate electrolyte (sodium, potassium) and water replacement.