

Hot Foot Bath



Description

A local bath that covers the feet and ankles, with temperatures generally ranging between 38–46°C. This treatment may be used alone or combined with another treatment, such as fomentations or the heating compress.

Physiologic Effects

The hot footbath affects the circulation of the entire body. Heat expands (dilates) the blood vessels of the feet, thereby moving excess blood from other body parts to the feet and relieving congestion in the brain (headache), lungs, and pelvic organs. It is also helpful in stimulating the activity of the white blood cells.

Treatment Indications

- Prevent or shorten colds, flu, or coughs
- Relieve congestion (congestive headaches, stopping nosebleeds, chest congestion, pelvic congestion, etc.)
- Pelvic cramps or prostate disorders
- Diminish pain anywhere in the body (from toothache to backache)
- Relieve fatigue and nervous tension
- Warm the body in preparation for massage or some other treatment

Treatment Precautions

- **CAUTION:** Use only mild heat in diabetics and others with loss of feeling or impaired blood flow to the legs and feet (no greater than 39°C).
- When adding hot water, keep your hand between the hot water and the person's feet to avoid burning them.

Equipment Needed

- 1 Chair
- 1 Large bucket or deep dishpan
- 1 Basin of cold water for the cold compress to the head (add ice to cold water if available)
- 1 Tea kettle or pitcher of very hot water
- 2 Washcloths (for the cold compress to the head)

- 2 Large towels
- 1 Bed sheet
- 1 Blanket
- 1 Glass of water (and a drinking straw—optional, makes drinking easier)
- 1 Towel or bath mat to place under bucket so small spills will be absorbed and person will not put their feet on the cold floor after completion of the treatment
- Thermometer. If you cannot get a thermometer, do not raise temperature higher than is comfortable for the elbow or back of wrist.

NOTE: If the individual has diabetic neuropathy, do not do the treatment if you cannot find a thermometer. Even an oral thermometer will work for the lower temperatures used with diabetics.

- **Optional:** 1 Pitcher of very cold water to pour over feet to end treatment (add ice to cold water if available). You may also use the cold water used for the cold compress to the head to pour over the feet.
- **Optional:** 1 large piece of plastic to put on floor under the foot tub to keep bed or floor dry

Treatment Procedure

1. Preparation for Treatment

- This treatment may be given with the person sitting on a chair or lying on a flat surface. This treatment will be described with the person sitting on a chair.
- Have the room warm, free of cold drafts, and all equipment assembled before beginning.
- Explain the procedure to the person, and assist the person in preparation for treatment.
- Place a blanket over the chair, and cover the blanket with a bed sheet. Put a piece of plastic under the basin, and cover the plastic with a dry towel.
- Prepare the footbath with enough warm water to cover the ankles.

2. Treatment

- Pray with the person.
- Test the water with your elbow or back of wrist to determine the comfort level (the hands can often tolerate temperatures that are too hot for the feet). Put your hands under the person's feet and carefully immerse them in the warm water bath. Ask the person if the temperature is comfortable, too hot, or too cool. Adjust the temperature as needed by adding hot or cold water.
- Completely wrap the person and the foot tub in the sheet and blanket.
- Leave the head and neck exposed. May wrap a towel around the lower neck and shoulders to help prevent loss of heat.
- When sweating occurs, put cold, wet washcloths on the forehead. May also wipe perspiration from the face as desired.
- Have the person drink water freely throughout the treatment to replace the water lost in sweating. (**Note:** If you are checking the person's temperature with an oral thermometer, make sure to give water AFTER checking the temperature, as drinking may falsely lower the oral temperature reading.)
- Periodically add hot water to the footbath to maintain the desired temperature. Place your hand between the hot water being poured and the person's feet (to avoid burning the feet). Stir water while pouring. Typically continue treatment 15 to 20 minutes, depending on the goal of the treatment.

3. Completion of Treatment

- Lift the feet out of the hot water and point the toes upward. Quickly pour cold water over the feet.
- Remove tub and place feet on the dry towel. Thoroughly pat dry the feet and toes (do not rub vigorously as you may remove skin). Immediately after drying, put on warm socks or slippers to avoid chilling.
- If a **mild** treatment was given (congestion, relaxation, pain, cramps, etc.), and no sweating occurred, person may wish to rest for a few minutes before resuming activities.
- If a **moderate** treatment was given (congestion, relaxation, pain, cramps, etc.), and mild sweating occurs, briskly rub the skin with a cold washcloth, and then dry the skin with a towel. Remove damp garments and replace them with clean, dry clothing. The person should ideally rest for 20 to 30 minutes after the treatment. If further sweating occurs during rest, take a cool bath or shower to finish the treatment.
- If a **vigorous** treatment was given (colds, flu, mobilizing immune system, etc.) and significant sweating occurs, after putting on warm socks, wrap the sheet and blan-

ket around person, walk with them to their bed, tuck them in bed (may wish to keep the sheet and blanket around them to prevent chilling if the regular bed sheets are cold), and let them continue sweating for an hour. If they feel chilled from the dampened clothes, quickly replace wet clothing with dry clothes, and return promptly to bed. The person may wish for a cool cloth to be placed on their forehead while they rest. After resting for an hour, and their temperature returns to normal, the person may then get up and take a shower to remove wastes secreted by the body during the treatment.

Specific Treatment Recommendations

1. Congestive headaches, congestion of the lungs, congestion of the pelvic organs, other cases where mild treatment is desired.

In this case, movement of the congested blood, relaxation, or relief of pain is the primary goal of the treatment. As such, typically the blanket and the towel around the neck and shoulders are not required and the goal should not be to cause the person to sweat. Instead, the goal is to equalize the circulation and bring relaxation. Therefore, the water should be maintained at a constant, but very warm temperature. The treatment should be continued for a few minutes after the goal has been reached (for example, relief of headache) and generally should last 15-20 minutes. May be repeated as needed.

2. Colds, Flu, and Other Infectious Processes

- **NOTE:** Only use these recommendations for a person that does not have diabetes, numbness, or impaired circulation in their feet and legs.
- Wrap the person snugly in the sheet and blanket, wrapping a towel around the lower neck and shoulder to keep as much warmth in as possible. Make sure there are no drafts around the feet.
- Begin with warm water to the feet; then continue adding hot water as frequently as the person can tolerate it without burning their feet or ankles.
- Give hot herbal tea or plain hot water if tolerated to help raise the core body temperature faster.
- After person begins sweating, place a cold cloth on their forehead, changing as desired.
- Continue the treatment for as long as the person can tolerate it—up to 20 minutes after they start sweating.
- If the person has a fever already, monitor their temperature so it does not climb excessively high.
- Finish as listed above for a “vigorous treatment.”

Contrast Bath or Shower



Description

The immersion of a body part alternately in hot and cold water. The hot and cold water may be applied with cloths to body areas that cannot be easily immersed in water. The blood vessels expand (dilate) with heat and contract (constrict) with cold. This increases the flow of blood to the region being treated, and reflexively to other regions as well in some cases. It can relieve congestion in other parts of the body as well.

Physiologic Effects

The increased blood flow helps to:

- Enhance the supply of oxygen and nutrients to the body cells.
- Hasten removal of the cell's waste products.
- Increase white blood cell activity.

Increased local cell metabolism and immune system mobilization results, which aids in more rapid healing of the treated body part.

Treatment Indications

- Localized infection. Give treatment 2-6 times per day to stimulate the body's local defences to help fight the infection.
- Sprains, strains, and other injuries to the muscles and joints.
NOTE: Treat injury only with ice-water for first 24-48 hours, depending on severity.
- Hastening healing of fractures. Wait for a few days after the fracture occurred before beginning hydrotherapy.
- Arthritis
- Headaches (contrast bath to the extremities—especially the feet and legs)
- Oedema (swelling of a body part due to fluid retention)
- Poor blood circulation to the legs and feet, causing skin breakdown, skin ulcers, etc.

Treatment Precautions and Contraindications

- Do NOT use very hot or very cold water in cases of loss of feeling or blood vessel disease of the legs and feet, for example in diabetics. In such cases, use only mildly warm and cool water, very gradually increasing the temperature of the warm water, and decreasing the temperature of the cool water as the condition improves. Carefully observe the person to see how they are tolerating the temperatures.
- Be careful not to spread infection. Use gloves if possible when infections or wounds are present, and disinfect the hydrotherapy equipment after treating an open sore or wound.
- Avoid treating any area where there is a tendency to bleed or haemorrhage.
- In cases of malignancies, do not use this treatment unless under guidance of a physician skilled in hydrotherapy.

Equipment Needed

- 2 Large basins, one for hot and one for cold water, large enough to submerge the part to be treated.
- 1 Tea kettle or pitcher containing very hot water
- 1 Bucket with extra ice cubes
- 1 Towel

Optional:

- Sheet or light blanket as needed for modesty or warmth—depending on part being treated
- Small basin with ice water and two washcloths for cool compress if sweating occurs
- Disinfectant for cleaning equipment after the treatment

Treatment Procedure

1. Preparation for Treatment

- Have the room warm and all equipment assembled.
- Explain the procedure and assist the person in preparation for treatment.

2. Treatment

- Pray with the person.
- Begin with the hot water bath. Start with milder heat, increase the temperature as tolerated. Do NOT increase over 39° C in peripheral vascular disease or diabetes.
- After 3 minutes—or the specified time for the specific condition—transfer to the cold water bath and keep part immersed for 30 seconds.
- During the treatment, keep the hot and cold baths at the desired temperature by adding hot or cold water as needed.
- Place a cold compress on the head if sweating occurs.
- Make 5 to 8 changes per treatment.
- Treat 1 to 4 times per day and up to 6 times for infections.

3. Completion of Treatment

- If the treatment is to be followed by massage to the body part, or when treating rheumatoid arthritis, end the treatment with hot. Otherwise, end treatment with cold.
- After the last change, thoroughly dry the treated body part.
- **NOTE:** If sweating occurs (uncommon), remove damp clothing, dry body, and dress in clean dry garments. Then rest for 20 to 30 minutes.

Specific Treatment Recommendations

1. Localized Infections, Muscle and Joint Injuries

- Treat acute muscle and joint injuries with ice water or cold packs, rest, elevation of the affected body part, and immobilization for the first 24-48 hours, depending on severity. A supportive bandage, such as an Ace bandage, may be helpful. See your physician if injury is severe or does not improve as would be expected.
- After 24-48 hours, begin the contrast bath treatment with water as hot as can be tolerated.
- Alternate from hot to cold water 5 to 7 times. End with the cold water bath.
- Repeat the above treatment 2 to 6 times per day.

2. Arthritis

- Begin the treatment with warm water (3 to 5 minutes), then change to cool water for 1 minute. Gradually increase the hot water temperature and reduce the cold water temperature as tolerated.
- Alternate from hot to cold water 5 to 7 times. End with the hot water bath.
- Repeat the above treatment 1 to 2 times per day.

3. Decreased Circulation (Blood Flow) to the Extremities

- Treat with mild heat (39°C) for 3 minutes and cool water (no ice) for 60 seconds.
- Test the hot water with your elbow to be certain that it is not too hot.
- Alternate from warm to cool water 5 to 7 times. End with the warm water bath.
- Repeat the above treatment 1 to 2 times per day.

4. General Immune Booster (Contrast Shower)

- Take a hot shower for 3 minutes.
- Switch to cold for 30 seconds.
- Do 3 to 5 cycles, increasing the hot and decreasing the cold temperature, one or two times per day