

BALNEOTHERAPY also known as “Medicinal Bathing”

By Carol Hannington. Naturopath and Aromatherapist

Presentation Overview:

- § History of therapeutic bathing
- § At home bathing practise.

Working in the naturopathic industry, I have seen a real change in the way naturopaths both heal and prescribe. We have become extremely science based, with the emphasis very much on tests, numbers, etc. Yes, this is the modern world but I feel somewhere along the way we have lost and left behind some of the old way of doing things. My personal love is herbal medicine and essential oils and all the history attached to that also.

Naturopathy used to include therapeutic bathing and the use of water to heal. In fact, this is where naturopathy really started. So let's see, let us have a look at some of this history.

I am sure everyone is familiar with bathing in Roman times, the Romans were of course famous for building baths. I myself have been to the Roman baths in Bath in the UK, and it's absolutely amazing! Many on the continent, including France and Germany were built on natural hot mineral springs, such as those at Vichy in France and Baden-Baden in Germany. Where there was no naturally occurring heat, the Ancient Romans were clever enough to heat from underneath from *Aqueducts*. Other great civilisations with a culture of medicinal bathing were the Ancient Egyptians (of course Cleopatra was famous for bathing in milk). The Egyptians had “Temples of Beauty” where up to 7 or more people would attend to you. The Ancient Greeks actually brought bathing to the Romans, and in the Ottoman Empire steam and herb baths and bathing in rivers and streams was absorbed into the Islamic tradition. Bathing in Japan is an important part of Japanese culture, this probably dates back to the practise of Buddha soaking in hot springs

The founder of naturopathy was Sebastien Kneipp, a 19th century Bavarian priest, who in fact used water cures alongside herbal medicine, nutrition and exercise. There are many more examples of physicians and naturopaths using water cures in the last few centuries, but in the last 20 years balneotherapy was dropped from naturopathic training due to bureaucrats deciding this should no longer be part of the training package, ahh well!!! “Taking of the Waters” is now more the realm of the spa and beauty therapists and

somewhere along the way we have lost this as part of healing. No matter, we can treat ourselves at home, let me show you how.

We are lucky enough here on the peninsula to have the healing power of the ocean all around us. We all know we feel calmer at the water's edge, but bathing in the sea has medicinal effects due to the mineral content. At home there are many ways you can include medicinal bathing as part of your health plan and daily routine. When showering you can begin before you step into the shower by

- ‡ *DRY SKIN BRUSHING* : you can purchase a brush from either health food stores, The Body Shop or Perfect Potion. You start at your feet and work your way up. This is excellent for detoxification, cellulite, removing dead skin cells, for circulation, for the lymphatic system, moving stagnant chi energy in the meridians and for glowing skin.
- ‡ *SALT SCRUB* with Celtic Sea Salt or Himalayan Salt: wonderful as an aid to detox, exfoliation and generally feeding the skin and leaving it radiant. Blend with extra virgin olive oil or coconut oil for good glide and to moisturise.
- ‡ *CONTRAST BATHING*: this is particularly beneficial when you are feeling sluggish or low on energy. Switch the shower between cold water and warm water every 30 seconds or so. You will be amazed at how revitalised you can feel! Really excellent for poor circulation. Will also help to tone the skin, particularly on the breasts and décolletage.

BATHS: If you are lucky enough to have a bath at home you can create a home spa and a healing/relaxing haven for yourself. A good thing to start with, which most people are familiar with is the Epsom salt bath. Transdermal absorption of magnesium sulphate is a powerful yet gentle muscle relaxant. It also has enzymes which drag nutrients into the skin. Nutrients include magnesium, silica, selenium sulphur and calcium. Another thing you may wish to include is clay. Clay baths are excellent for detoxification of liver and kidneys, for a sluggish metabolism, for drawing out toxins and absorbing nutrition trans-dermally. Muds and clays are not always easy to find and each type has different therapeutic benefits. For instance pink clay is more toning, whereas green clay is more drawing. Dead Sea mineral mud is highly beneficial and one of my favourites. I personally use a facial mud mask once per week to keep my skin in tip top condition. You can also save a fortune by not needing a facial with a beauty therapist! As I previously stated, clays are not that easy to find, some health stores sell them, as does Perfect Potion, but online may be your best bet at Aussie Soap Supplies.

Most people are aware of the benefits of essential oils in their baths, so we won't touch upon that today, but please feel free to ask questions at the end. You can also use herbs in your bath however, some lavender(in a muslin bag or old tights) for relaxation, or oats for eczema and skin irritations. Specifically chosen high quality herbs can really enhance your bathing experience and you can immerse yourself in a great big herbal tincture! Some of you may even prefer to absorb it through your skin rather than drink a herbal extract or tea!

You can also make an at-home-spa-wrap. Take an old sheet and dampen it with herbal tea, some clay maybe, perhaps diluted essential oils etc and after a hot shower wrap yourself in said sheet, cover yourself with a big old towel or blanket and sweat it out for half an hour. It's a great treatment! If you are after weight loss you may wish to include some kelp powder or seaweed.

More concentrated baths include *SITZ BATHS*, where you just bathe a specific area. Sitz baths are usually a bath only around your pelvic/genital region and can be for lower back problems, UTI's , haemorrhoids, period pain (I recommend Clary sage essential oil especially here)etc. Included in balneotherapy is also the foot bath, the hand bath and immersing specific areas such as elbows etc to treat inflammatory conditions or injuries.

In conclusion, I feel we have almost forgotten water as a healing medium, and yet it is so plentiful, available and easily utilised. From anxiety to fibromyalgia you can use medicinal bathing to help heal. If this interests you I recommend you google about or read Masaru Emoto's book " The Secret Life Of Water" which slides into the esoteric and spiritual but is incredibly enlightening.

Carol Hannington.

Naturopath and Aromatherapist.

20 Years in the health industry.



Left. A LARGE VIOLET-COLOURED BATH

Below. 'Abundant health - Freedom from fatigue - Satisfying slenderness - in Elizabeth Arden's newest treatment THE ARDENA BATH'



CECIL BEATON 1931

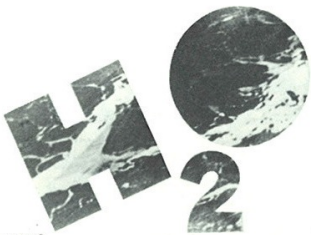
NATURES AID TO BEAUTY



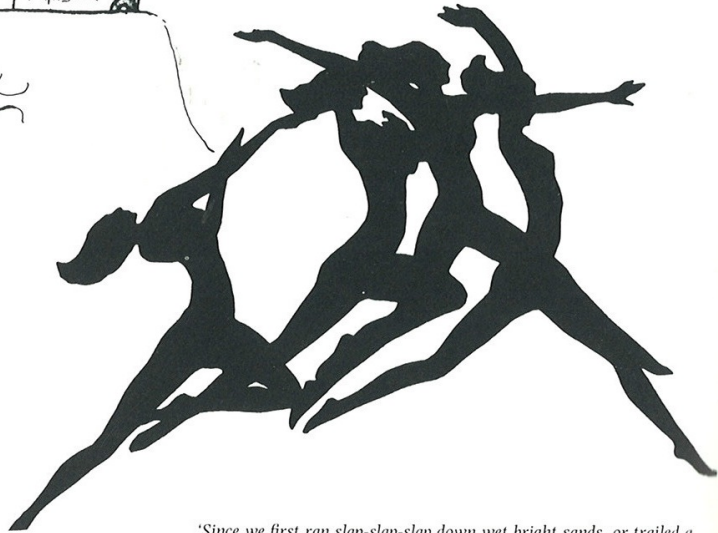
1932

SOFT WATER

Right. 'You hear it whispered at a luncheon ... it holds up the rubber at the Club ... the fascinating story of how, in the blessed restfulness of a Foam Bath. Slimming Treatment has become an hour or so of sheer delight.'



1936



'Since we first ran slap-slap-slap down wet bright sands, or trailed a hand over the side of the boat to feel the current running between the fingers, against the palm - water has been pure pleasure, for which there is no reason. The body loves its touch; the eye delights in it; the sleepless think of it till they fall asleep.'

WE BUBBLE ALONG TO BEAUTY NOW!

AND LAPPED IN SNOW-WHITE FOAM
UNLEASH OUR AVOIRDUPOIS



1931