

# European Kneipp Hydrotherapy

## Perfect home treatment for summertime

by Nicole Duelli, Hp, CCH, RSHom (NA)

**I** believe that small changes practised every day can impact health in a very positive way—keeping you healthier longer. What’s amazing about water therapy is that it’s free, you can do it in the comfort of your own bathroom and you can take as little or as much time as you need. Water can relax or stimulate you—and it is the perfect example of infinite ways to be healthier without it impacting your pocketbook.

### Water as therapy

Of course you’ve taken a hot bath or shower to wash away the ills of a stressful day—which means you’ve used water therapeutically. That’s because warm water relaxes tense muscles, relieves nervous energy and helps you get a better night’s sleep.

But if you’d like more energy and better circulation, then you must try cold water, too—and if you’ve never tried it, it’s not as painful as it sounds! Just seconds of cold water is invigorating, enlivens cells and builds the immune system. If you’ve ever washed your face with cold water in the morning to wake up, then you know how wonderful it can be.

### Spas in Europe

In Europe and especially Germany, old traditional methods such as water therapy are used alongside conventional medical treatments in spas as a preventative and recovery from heart attacks, strokes and nervous system disorders. Medical insurance companies actually pay for these two- to four-week spa visits because they believe that long-term and preventative health actually costs less in the long run.

### Water treatments at home

Luckily, you don’t have to go all the way to Europe to benefit—anyone can incorporate

water treatments into their daily routine. And summer is the best time to start cold-water treatments because high temperatures often cause circulation and energy to suffer. Cold water stimulates, invigorates and enlivens, and if you use this every day, it actually builds your internal resistance to infections, making you stronger and healthier.

### Water stepping

Are you suffering from sore, aching and swollen feet after a long hike or being on your feet all day? Or do you have cold feet, swollen legs, varicose veins? Use water stepping and you’ll marvel at the difference.

You can begin by filling your bathtub ankle deep with cold water. Secure a bathmat in place, so there’s no danger of slipping. Now step into the cold water and walk on one spot, lifting your feet high up and out of the water. You won’t be able to do this for long because soon your feet will hurt from the cold water, but once you step out and dry off, you’ll find your feet warm quickly (even if they were initially cold) and your legs and whole body feel refreshed.

Water stepping is an excellent way to venture into the world of cold-water treatments. Just remember that whenever you use cold water, be sure your body is warm when you start. Never apply cold water when you’re already feeling chilly.

Next time you’re out on the beach in the hot sun, feeling sluggish and tired, try water stepping in the cool ocean or lake water. You’ll find this invigorating, too, and it has the same effect on circulation.

### Hot / cold foot baths relieve headaches

If the thought of freezing cold water doesn’t appeal, a gentler way to go is alternating hot and cold foot baths. It’s comforting and still stimulates circulation. Hot/cold foot baths also relieve headaches. If you’ve been over-thinking, feeling overwhelmed

and confused, try the hot/cold foot bath technique. By stimulating circulation in the lower part of the body, excess energy is drawn from the head. It’s relaxing and invigorating at the same time.

In one basin, add comfortably hot water to ankle depth, in the other add cold. Start soaking in the hot water for five minutes; then switch to cold for 30 seconds (if you only have one container, you can improvise with running cold water). Repeat the procedure three times, but be sure to end with cold water because it is the cold water that stimulates circulation.

### Cold-water rinse

Another quick and easy way to incorporate water therapy in your daily routine is ending your bath or shower with a five- to 10-second cold rinse. Cold water can be shocking, so start slow (and check with your doctor if you have any heart problems)—once you turn the hot water off, just put your feet in. Next time or at your own pace, you can go a little further—to the knees, the thighs—and lastly, the whole body.

You can do as little or as much as you like, but ending with cold water after every morning shower jump-starts your day, prevents circulatory problems and builds resistance to disease. You’ll find that you get sick less often and you’ll have more energy in the morning.

### A little every day

Water therapy is a simple method to give you energy, treat circulatory problems and combat everyday stress. A little every day can help keep you healthy and balanced—and best of all, it’s free! ●

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