

# Hydrotherapy

## "A Most Powerful Remedy"

### Hot Foot Bath

(See references 3, 11, 15, 16, 17)

**Definition:** A local bath which covers the feet and ankles—with temperatures generally ranging between 100-115° F (38-46° C).

This treatment may be used alone or combined with another treatment such as fomentations or the heating compress. 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 (numbness) or decreased (or otherwise impaired) blood flow to the legs and feet (no greater than 102° F (39° C)).<sup>4</sup>
- 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 (add ice to cold water if available) for the cold compress to the head
- 1 Tea kettle or pitcher of very hot water
- 2 Washcloths (for the cold compress to the head)
- 2 Large towels
- 1 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)  
⇒ Note: may also use the cold water used for the cold compress to the head to pour over the feet instead.
- **Optional:** 1 Large piece of plastic to put on floor under the foot tub (to keep bed or floor dry) if desired or needed



### Treatment Procedure

#### 1. Preparation for Treatment

- This treatment may be given with the person sitting on a chair or lying on a flat surface.
- 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.
- This treatment will be described with the person sitting on a chair.
- Place a blanket over the chair, and cover the blanket with a 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!
- 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 temperature with an oral (mouth) thermometer, make certain 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 (see below).

#### 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 blanket 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.