

Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee

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HYDROTHERAPY AND THE SAUNA: THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Hydrotherapy, which simply means water therapy, is a popular and very accessible means of recovery. Water therapy includes any modality that uses water for the treatment of an injury. Hydrotherapy includes the many different kinds of showers and baths, spas that have air or water jets, and swimming or exercising in the pool.

A shower can have both a temperature effect and a mechanical effect on the body. For example, a prolonged, hot shower reduces the excitability of your sensory and motor nerves and can intensify the metabolic processes of the body. On the other hand, a warm shower can lead to a soothing effect on the body and help to relax you. An opposite effect can be achieved from what is known as a contrast shower. This type of shower consists of taking a hot shower for approximately one minute, with a water temperature of 100 - 102 degrees Fahrenheit. Follow this by: a five to ten second cold shower, with a water temperature of 54 - 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Continue altering the water temperature for five to seven minutes. This type of shower can improve muscle tone and improve circulation of the cardiovascular system. A hot water bath with a water temperature of 101 - 103 degrees can help to promote rapid recovery of strength after a workout. A bath of this type should be taken either soon after a workout or in the evening. A few hours after using heat baths, athletes report an improved sense of well being, greater strength, a feeling of freshness, good mood, competitive desire, courage, removal of fatigue and increased energy. One reason for these positive feelings is because of an increased secretion of metabolic products with a restoration of other metabolic substances. Other positive changes from heat baths are in the higher nerve centers and in biochemical processes of muscle contractions. Blood circulation in the skin improves and this will help the muscles to relax.

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