

Epsom Salt Baths

Because of the high magnesium content, Epsom salts promote the release of lactic acid from muscle tissue. An Epsom salts bath can be helpful any time you are suffering from achy strained muscle. It is also an excellent idea for the evening after you have had a massage as it helps to clear out released lactic acid. This may prevent the temporary generalized soreness following the massage treatment of a particularly tight area.

Muscle Tension

Muscle activity uses oxygen and nutrients while producing waste such as carbon dioxide. The principle waste product of muscle metabolism is called lactic acid. Nutrients and wastes are transported to and from muscles by the blood circulation, and so the efficiency of this transport system is dependent upon good blood flow. Poor or insufficient blood flow causes an accumulation of lactic acid producing tension in muscles.

Muscle Pain

There are many types of muscle pain, but all of us are familiar with the stiff, achy feeling of a muscle that is reacting to an unusual level of exercise, a chronic strain or build up of stress-related tension. This achy sensation is caused by the development of lactic acid residues in the muscle tissue, compounded by the fact that a tight muscle clamps down on its supply blood vessels and impedes drainage of its own tissue.

Massage

Massage acts on the tight, achy muscle in several ways. It helps relax tension and spasm and promotes the release of lactic acid from the tissue. This relaxing action automatically enhances the function of the supplying blood vessels. In addition, massaging actively increases the rate of blood flow to and from the area.

Instructions for Taking the Bath

Epsom salts are readily available at your local pharmacy. Use 2-4 cups in a full bath, the temperature of which is as hot as you can comfortably tolerate. You must soak in the bath for a minimum of 20 minutes, without adding any bathing solutions or oils and without using soap, as these substances will alter the chemistry of the water. After soaking for 20 minutes, you may wash or rinse off as you wish.

To replace the fluid you lose during perspiration, keep a glass of cold water beside you and sip it during the bath. If you like, you may also wring a towel in cold water and wrap it around your neck. Make sure you get out of the tub slowly and carefully.

CAUTION: If you are 50 or have diagnosed heart trouble, you should moderate the water temperature and avoid submerging your body above heart level. You should definitely use a cold towel around your neck, keeping a bucket of cold water available beside the tub for wringing. If you have any concerns about whether a hot tub will affect you adversely, please consult with your doctor before using the Epsom salts bath.