

ICE BATHS

USER GUIDE

FIRST, PREPARE YOURSELF

- Shower to clean and prime the surface of your skin prior to entering the water, it's vital to remove oils, lotions and sweat.
- Ensure that you are well-hydrated. Avoid alcohol or heavy meals within the last 90 minutes, failure to do so may increase the risk of hypothermia.
- Never use an ice bath alone. Always ensure another person is present to monitor your wellbeing.
- Deliberate cold exposure asks you to decide to enter, that your mind and body want to.
- Relax: Close your eyes and feel and release any tension, relax your shoulders and jaw - know what you want today from the cold and listen to your body.

USE THE ICE BATH SAFELY

- The goal is to feel uncomfortable, that you want to get out but feel safe staying in.
- A typical cold water exposure session is to sit and submerge to your neck for 1-3 minutes.
- How much you submerge your body, at what water temperature and for how long are all dependent on how you feel today, this may change daily - listen to your body.
- Keep your head above water at all times, no head dunking.
- Enter the ice bath slowly and carefully to avoid cold shock. Never jump or drop in.
- Limit your immersion to 5 minutes maximum, or until you feel uncomfortably cold, this is typically 2-3 minutes at 0°C-3°C.
- Exit the bath slowly and carefully by first sitting on the back deck. Your limbs may feel stiff at first.

AFTER THE ICE BATH

- After exiting, pat the skin with a towel to dry off and warm up gradually.
- Allow the blood flow to return to your limbs and your body to return to normal temperature before repeating the process, if desired.
- Air squats, horse stance, walking or sitting eyes closed are all ways to consciously warm-up.
- Feeling cold after is normal. If you feel any signs of hypothermia (intense shivering, numbness, loss of coordination, confusion), seek medical attention immediately.

YOU SHOULD NOT USE THE ICE BATH IF YOU:

- Have a serious illness, heart condition, or high blood pressure.
- Are taking medication that affects your body's ability to regulate temperature.
- Have a cold, flu, an open wound, sore, or a skin infection.
- Have Raynaud's syndrome or peripheral neuropathy.
- Have recently eaten a heavy meal (within one hour) or are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Have recently exercised intensely. Allow your body to cool down first.
- Always consult a doctor before engaging in cold water immersion if you have any pre-existing health concerns.

BE AWARE THAT:

- Always shower first to clean and prime the surface of your skin, removing lotions, oils and sweat.
- The water temperature in an ice bath can be as low as 0°C-10°C (32-50°F). Ice indicates <1°C. Ensure that you can tolerate this temperature.
- Dependent on your tolerance, immersion time should never exceed 5 minutes per session, or 3 minutes for 0°C.
- When using an ice bath, you must allow your body to warm up naturally after each session.
- You must wear appropriate swimwear. Swimwear will not be affected by cold water immersion.
- You should never submerge your head in the ice bath to avoid the increased risk of cold shock, hair products also contaminate the water.

POTENTIAL HAZARDS:

- Adverse reaction to cold or rapid temperature change resulting in dizziness, fainting, or unconsciousness (cold shock response).
- Hypothermia is possible from prolonged exposure to cold water or if you're ill-prepared.
- Infection from contamination of the water or ice.
- Slipping injuries caused by wet surrounds or from entry or exit into the ice bath.
- Drowning, especially if experiencing cold shock or cramping.
- Aggravation of existing cardiovascular or respiratory conditions.

ARE YOU IN ONE OF THESE GROUPS?

OLDER ADULTS: You may gain some benefits from the use of cold water immersion but should exercise extreme caution due to the stresses on the heart and circulatory system. Older adults should consult with their doctor before attempting cold water immersion.

PREGNANT: Those who are pregnant are advised not to use ice baths or engage in cold water immersion due to potential risks to the developing fetus. Always seek medical advice before considering cold water therapy during pregnancy.

DIABETICS: People with diabetes should check with their doctor before using ice baths or cold water immersion. Cold temperatures can affect circulation and nerve sensitivity, potentially exacerbating existing neuropathy issues. Diabetics should also be cautious as the cold may interfere with their ability to detect warning signs of hypoglycemia.

CARDIOVASCULAR CONDITIONS: Individuals with cardiovascular issues, such as hypertension, heart disease, or circulatory disorders, should avoid ice baths or cold water immersion, as sudden cold exposure can cause a rapid increase in heart rate and blood pressure, potentially leading to adverse cardiac events.

RESPIRATORY DISORDERS: Those with respiratory conditions like asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) should exercise caution, as cold water immersion can cause a sudden contraction of the airways, potentially triggering an asthma attack or exacerbating breathing difficulties.

EXPERIENCING HIGH LEVELS OF STRESS: Take it slowly and be mindful, consider cold showers instead of immersion and talk to your GP. It's essential to approach ice baths cautiously and consider individual factors before deciding if it's appropriate for you to take an ice bath. If you decide, stay above 5°C for gentle and short immersions.

CHILDREN: The body temperature of young children will drop much quicker than that of older children or adults owing to their underdeveloped thermo-regulatory mechanisms. Children should always be supervised closely by a responsible adult, the amount of time spent in the ice bath should be strictly limited, and they must be warmed up gradually after the session. Adults must be aware of the dangers of hypothermia in children and ensure early indications of stress are not put at risk.