

Bathing Away the Winter Blues



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A bath is a wonderful and relaxing way to wind down after work. What could be more tempting and tranquil than a warm bath on a cold winter's day?

Winter and your sleep

In the winter, our body must adjust to the change in temperature as well as to a change in sunlight. For some, the short days and long nights lead to a disruption of their circadian rhythm (internal body clock). This may lead to sleeping disorders, such as insomnia. Did you know that bathing can be therapeutic for those of you with sleeping disorders, particularly in the winter?

Bathing helps you fall asleep

A study was conducted in the Department of Ergonomics at the Kyushu Institute of Design on sleep behavior during the winter. Nine healthy female volunteers were studied for the effects of daily bathing and hot footbath (immersion of feet in hot water) on their sleep behavior. The women were assigned to 3 sleep conditions: 1) sleep after bathing, 2) sleep after hot footbath and 3) sleep without either treatment (control). The women's sleep patterns were recorded through polysomnography, which records electrical activity of the brain, eye movement, muscle activity, heart rate, airflow and blood oxygen levels during sleep. The women were also asked to fill out sleep quality questionnaires immediately upon waking. The women taking baths and hot footbaths took less time to fall asleep and had less body movement (restlessness) during sleep. The women who took baths and hot footbaths reported a better quality of sleep than the women who received neither treatment. The researchers concluded that both daily bathing and hot footbaths before sleeping facilitates better sleep.

The benefits of water

Water is not only beneficial for drinking, it is also a therapy. Hydrotherapy—a method of treating disease through the use of water of different temperatures—is a treatment modality that is often used in Naturopathic Medicine. It is useful for improving blood circulation and lymphatic (the vessels, other than blood vessels, where white blood cells circulate) drainage. Bathing and hot footbaths are a type of hydrotherapy. Based on the study above, we now see their value in helping us fall asleep.

Enjoy bathing

There are tens of thousands of bath products out there to help make your bathing experience enjoyable, fragrant and cleansing.