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TO HEAL & THRIVE

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— HAVE YOU TRIED —

HOT STONE MASSAGE

HOT STONE MASSAGE USES A COMBINATION OF MASSAGE AND CONTRASTING TEMPERATURES TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Words: Karen Young

Hot and cold stones have been used by various cultures throughout history to offer protection and to aid healing. However, it wasn't until 1993, when American masseuse Mary Nelson first incorporated smooth rocks from a sauna into her massage routine, that 'LaStone Therapy' was born. Several years later, the therapy was introduced to the UK by Jane Scrivner, who trained directly with Mary, after which similar routines and treatments started to emerge that also used a combination of massage and temperature regulated stones.

While the routine will vary according to the method of hot stone massage being carried out, a typical treatment involves the use of carefully heated basalt or jade stones, which warm the muscles and are said to work the tissue much deeper than a conventional massage. "In addition to using the stones as a massage tool, your therapist may also place stones on or under your body for a short period – including between your toes and in your hands – to aid relaxation and restore balance," explains Maria Mason, salon owner and vice president of the FHT. "Oil is either massaged into your body before the stones are used, or applied directly to the stones before they come into contact with your body. This helps to nourish the skin and produces a smooth massage stroke, which is said to be up to 10 times more powerful than the hand alone." As well as being a massage treatment in its own right, hot stones can also be used to enhance other therapies that target specific areas of the body, such as facials and foot treatments.



Treatments that are in keeping with the LaStone method alternate the use of heated stones with chilled marble stones, a process also known as 'contrast therapy'. "The thought of having cold stones applied during a massage might sound a little off-putting, but the combination of hot and cold is very therapeutic and actually makes for a really relaxing and enjoyable treatment," says Maria. "However, be sure to give your therapist a full medical history before your massage, as heart or circulatory problems, or conditions such as peripheral neuropathy, might make this treatment unsuitable."

Sessions last from 25 to 90 minutes and cost anything between £20 to £150, depending on the length and method of treatment, location and therapist.

To find a specific therapy or to locate a therapist near you, visit www.fht.org.uk and click on 'Find a therapist'.

The Federation of Holistic Therapists (www.fht.org.uk) is the UK and Ireland's leading professional association for complementary, holistic beauty and sports therapists.

Five benefits of hot stone therapy

1 Applying hot stones to the body draws blood to the surface, bringing oxygen and other nutrients to the skin and underlying tissue, helping to relax and soothe aching muscles.

2 If cold stones are used during treatment, these can help to reduce any localised inflammation and pain, so they may be useful for certain soft tissue injuries and some medical conditions such as arthritis.

3 Alternating between hot and cold stones during a session boosts circulation as blood is drawn back and forth in the body, helping to tone the skin and underlying muscles.

4 Suffering from mild constipation? Hot stone therapy is particularly good for 'flushing' waste out of the cells and supporting elimination processes as a whole, particularly if the abdominal area is treated.

5 It is well established that massage can aid relaxation and promote sleep, making it the ideal antidote for stress and anxiety.

BEFORE YOU GO

Hot stone therapy should only be used alongside standard medical care and not as an alternative. Consult your GP or other health professional for medical attention and advice.