

The West Australian

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MIND & BODY

HOT STONE HEALING

Looking for something new from your next massage? Hot stone therapy offers an energy boost with a difference.

Monica Videnieks reports.

Drawing from the energy of the universe and the body, hot stone massage is growing in popularity as a therapy that offers both deep relaxation and invigorating remedial work.

Using volcanic basalt stones, hot stone therapists massage the body with the stones and also leave them on the chakras — the key energy points on the body — to maximise the energy input.

Various cultures around the world have for centuries used stones for therapeutic purposes. Some believe stones taken from rivers have been energised by the minerals in the water, while others say volcanic stones have captured the energy of the earth and these vibrations can be transferred to the body through massage.

Whatever the truth, Perth therapists who use stone treatment say that after experiencing hot stone massage, most clients never go back.

Remedial massage therapist Esmat Parkar, who is based at Victoria Park Sports Massage Clinic, uses hot stones to warm, massage and holistically treat the body.

She said there is no one way to use the stones — when placed on the stomach they soothe and aid digestion, when placed on the face they ease sinus congestion and when

placed in the hands they relieve stress and tension.

"I use the stones on all of my clients and they love it. By the time they come to see me, many people have tried almost everything for their pain and injuries and they are so pleased when the stone therapy actually has results," Mrs Parkar said. "I find it very, very effective."

LaStone therapy uses hot and cold stones to massage the body. Basalt and marble stones are placed under the body as well as on the body for massage.

Caroline Oakes, owner of Embody Health in Subiaco, said the hot stones are used to relax the body and remove tension. The cold stones are used as a trigger point therapy and help flush the body of toxins and work the lymphatic system.

"Sometimes with remedial massage you are working away on one area (of the body) and it doesn't want to listen to you, so you get the stones out and then follow up with the cold stones and it really works wonders," Ms Oakes said.

"One lady I treated said she felt 10 inches (25cm) taller after I used the stones on her and another said to me, 'That wasn't a massage, that was an experience,' after her LaStone massage and I thought that really sums it up well."

LaStone therapy was devised by



HOT STONE MASSAGE CAN HELP:

- Sporting injuries and muscular aches.
- Arthritis.
- Upper and lower back pain.
- Reduce stress and sleeping problems.
- Ease headaches.

American Mary Hannigan in 1993 and is now widely used in Australia. Therapists who use LaStone purchase specialty stones from the United States. They leave them outside during a full moon to energise them.

LaStone therapy is also used in conjunction with aromatherapy and sometimes crystal therapy.

Ms Oakes said people with headaches, neck and back pain, sore hips, arthritis and sporting injuries all did well from LaStone therapy.

"The cold stones are amazing. They help to flush the body by pushing the blood back into the system and rejuvenating blood supply in the problem area," Ms Oakes said. "And because you don't pull up sore, it really helps to speed up recovery."

"Everyone falls in love with the stones."

BANTER BEATS THE BLUES

First-time antidepressant users might want to consider Ma Bell for therapy.

Depressed patients who received telephone therapy in addition to antidepressant medication were found to be less depressed after 18 months than those who received antidepressants alone, according to a report to be published in next month's Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology.

The US study of 393 patients followed up on a 2004 report on the same patients that examined moods six months after therapy.

At 18 months, 77 per cent of those receiving telephone therapy reported that their depression was either "much" or "very much"

improved, compared with 63 per cent of those receiving antidepressants alone.

Clinical psychologist and lead author Evette Ludman said phone therapy was a particularly valuable tool for the depressed patient.

"The nature of depression is you avoid situations that can actually improve your mood," she said — including seeing a therapist.

The biggest challenge was tracking down reticent, depressed subjects.

"We kept calling until people would talk with us. Even patients who didn't return our phone calls later told us, 'It meant a lot to me that you kept calling.'"

Hot stones ease tension while the cold work the lymphatic system.