How Baths Can Help Fibro Pain

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Using Warm Water for Fibromyalgia Therapy

Since warm water is readily available for most people, it's a cheap, easy and effective addition to your treatment plan. However, like any therapy, hot water can hinder or help, depending on your approach and the precautions you take. Learn how a simple bath can have a surprisingly positive impact on your fibromyalgia symptoms, and what you can do to prevent any negative side effects.

How Hot Water Helps Fibromyalgia Pain

Warm water has a myriad of benefits for a sore body, and all you need is a tub to enjoy the healing experience. A nice warm bath will:

- Help circulate the blood
- Reduce the force of gravity on sore joints
- Decrease swelling and inflammation
- Relax the muscles and mind

These positive effects seem to linger, too: most people find that circulation, soreness and swelling will continue to respond to the heat therapy after you get out of the tub.

Give yourself at least 20 minutes in the bath for the most benefit, and then do some stretching right after you dry off, while your body is still warm.

Tips to Make the Most of Your Therapeutic Bath

For the greatest benefits, keep in mind these principles of warm water therapy whenever you take to the tub for pain relief:

1. **Keep the water warm, but not hot.** Very hot water can stimulate your heart rate and lead to complications if you already have cardiac issues, so be sure your bath stays below 104 degrees. Use a water thermometer to make sure you're in the safe zone.
2. **Heat helps loosen and calm the joints, making it more comfortable to move around and carefully work out the stiffness.** Get in a bit of stretching and range of motion exercise while you have the advantage. Practice progressive muscle relaxation, gentle massage or even sitting yoga poses in the warm water.
3. **The water itself does most of the work, but you can help it along with some simple Epsom salts.** Low magnesium levels bring symptoms like fatigue and muscle spasms, which can blend with your wider fibromyalgia pain, but Epsom salts (or magnesium sulfate crystals) can help top up your magnesium levels and calm the discomfort.

Risks and Precautions for Hot Water Therapy

While there are good ways to get more out of every bath, there are also some precautions to take in order to protect your body:

- **Temperature control is important, but so is chemical control.** Hot tubs in particular need to be treated regularly to maintain a healthy pH balance, but you should also pay close attention to the soaps and salts you add to your bath. If you're prone to urinary tract infections, bathing may not be a good therapy for you at all.
- **Beware of Epsom salts if you have diabetes.** Although most people could use an extra shot of magnesium, this mineral can trigger a release of insulin, which could lead to complications in diabetics.
- **Stay awake and aware.** Warm water is great at inducing sleep, which can be good or bad, depending on the situation. Falling asleep in the bath is dangerous, so keep a clock close by to track your time in the tub and get out when you start to feel sleepy.

Although good habits will help you reap more rewards from your baths, don't make bathing a chore. Enjoy your downtime, using the relaxing silence to reflect or read while you soak, recover and rebound from fibromyalgia pain.