Geothermal Therapy

Hot and Cold Stone Massage

What is Geothermal Therapy?
What are the benefits and effects of Geothermal Therapy?
What is LaStone®?

Table of Contents
Geothermal Deep Stone Therapy ................................................................. 2
Effects of hot and cold ................................................................. 3
Why cold stones ................................................................................. 4
Thermo-therapy in your shower ................................................................. 6
More thermo-therapy at home ................................................................. 7
The benefits of stone massage and how it differs from other massage therapies ................... 8

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Geothermal Deep Stone Therapy

Geothermal Deep Stone Therapy is essentially deep tissue massage using hot and cold stones to treat and normalize tight and inflamed muscle tissue. Instead of using hands, knuckles, fingers and elbows to work deeply into the muscles and release the tensions, the stones are used to perform the same job. With a result that is 10 times as effective as hands would be.

First the tissue is warmed up and relaxed with hot stones. The area feels nicely warm and comfortable and many tensions evaporate like dew before the sun. Various techniques are used to further encourage relaxation of the muscles. Warm is after all much more pleasant than cold, so the more we can do with warmth, the better. This is generally speaking as there are specific cases where hot stones won't provide good results or might even be a bad idea. This is one of the reasons why the therapist must go through proper training in geothermal therapy.

Once an area is warmed up, the cold is used to work on specific areas and muscles. After the heat the cold feels wonderfully refreshing. As cold is sedative, you can work much deeper and effectively. The discomfort is markedly less than it would be during normal deep tissue massage.

The stones serve as a tool which allows the therapist to work much more intensively than she possibly could with her fingers, and in a shorter time. Different shapes and sizes of the stones allows the therapist to do specific work on practically all muscle groups in the body. The cold allows the therapist to go deeply into the tissue and get to those areas where most never go.

The cold is only applied for short periods of time, only as long as it takes to draw out that excess heat in the muscles and cool the particular area down. One stroke of cold stone roughly equals ten strokes by hand, so an area is worked on less than it would be during a normal massage. More isn't necessary. Once the cold is removed, the body sends a fresh supply of warm blood to the area, which is full of oxygen and nutrition. This speeds up and aids the body's own healing process.

The different techniques used in Deep Stone create amazing results. The combination of hot and cold flush the system, and the deep cold massage releases those stubborn tensions in the body. The client will leave the table feeling great. He has an increased range of motion and muscles which are relaxed and normalized. There's no pain the day after, at most only a light soreness. Deep Stone is a great massage therapy technique, which is effective and gentle at the same time.

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Effects of hot and cold

Physiotherapists and medical professionals have long used both hot and cold for treating injuries and pains. Sports people apply cold packs on muscles after heavy exercise, they use hot packs to reduce tightness and pain in muscles. Hot and cold is a very effective treatment method of muscles and the body.

The effects of heat:

- causes blood vessels to expand, increasing blood supply
- increases circulation, bringing fresh blood to the heated muscles
- helps the body get rid of waste products (increases the lymph function)
- increases the metabolism
- makes muscles and tissue relax as they expand

Too much heat isn't good either - and I'm not talking about burning - as it makes the body try to get rid of the excess heat, including taking blood away from the central organs and the brain. This leads to a feeling of being relaxed, woozy and light-headed, just wanting to sleep so the body can recover and find its balance again.

The effects of cold:

- causes blood vessels to contract, sending blood and fluid away from the cooled area
- the body's pain relievers are released, numbing pain
- constricts blood-flow to areas exterior to the cooled area
- stops muscle spasms and relaxes the muscles

Too much cold makes the body send warm rich blood to the area that's cold, eventually taking heat from the internal organs.

Combining the two and alternating between hot and cold creates an even more powerful reaction. The effect is something called vascular gymnastics, a sort of roller-coaster effect between the two different effects. The outcome is greater than the effect.
Why cold stones

When I first mention to people that I use hot -and- cold stones they usually pause, apprehensive of the cold. Who can blame them. When I say cold, most people instantly think of cold weather, snow, an ice-cube down the back, freezing fingers and a bunch of other uncomfortable things.

A massage is after all meant to be comfortable, relaxing and an enjoyment. Warm stones are pleasant, but why add the cold to the experience?

There are many reasons for this, which I will briefly cover in this article.

Overheating
The most important factor is overheating. Using cold stones in combination with hot stones prevents overheating. A stone massage with only hot stones is like sitting in a sauna for an hour, without a cool shower afterwards. It leaves you sluggish and sleepy, your alertness is reduced and it might even feel uncomfortable to you.

These are all warning signs that the core temperature is too hot. The body focuses on protecting itself, by lowering the blood supply to the brain and instead direct cooler blood from the surface of the body towards the internal organs. This is why you just want to lie down and sleep if a stone massage has been too warm for you.

By applying cold stones the blood stream is cooled down and excess heat is removed from the body. When cold stones are used right, you're refreshed and energized after a massage, while maintaining the benefits of relaxation and released tensions.

Inquire and ask questions
If you encounter a stone massage where only hot stones are used, do ask the practitioner questions. Where did they do their training, what is their reason for only using hot stones, do they know of the potential health risks, how do they deal with overheating and how much hot do they apply to their massage.

Obviously, if they only use a couple of hot stones to release tensions in particular tight tissue and the room is cool, the risk of overheating is minimal. If they on the other hand use only hot stones during the entire massage, then there's a great risk of overheating. Be critical and ask your questions before the massage begins.

I have a client who had only tried hot stones and she absolutely hated the experience because she became overheated from the treatment. I introduced her first to cold stones and then at the next massage convinced her to try the combination of hot and cold. Now she just loves massage with hot and cold stones, and while preferring the cold, she wouldn't want to be without the hot.

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Therapeutic use
Therapeutically there are many reasons to use cold. Cold helps to relieve muscular tension much more efficiently than hot does. It reduces inflammation and scar tissue, and cold promotes mobility. The combination of hot and cold helps flush out waste-products and kick starts the lymphatic system.

The overall health benefits can be compared to spending a time in a hot sauna and then jump into the snow or icy lake. I must say though that it's much more comfortable to receive the hot/cold flush on the massage table than jumping out into the snow.

Energetic balance
On an energetic level the hot and cold works like yin and yang. Using both in combination brings balance to the massage, and can open up for strong spiritual experiences. The alternating temperatures can also help release emotional tensions, and it promotes an increased body-awareness for the receiver.

Cold feels good
If cold stone feels outright uncomfortable and makes you squirm, it is because it isn't used right. A stone needs to be cold, not just cool - all depending on location and use of the stone. Often a stone which isn't cold enough will feel horrible, while a stone that's chilled properly will feel hot and comfortable.

How the stone is used matters greatly. If it is moved too quickly it will feel terrible. The trick is to move slowly, and that's very slowly. This way the cold also gets time to penetrate the muscle tissue and really work its magic.

Finally, the tissue needs to be warmed up before applying the cold. The cold is applied to draw out excess heat, not to make you feel cold. If there's no excess heat in the tissue worked on, then the cold stone will only serve to cool down the muscle instead of bringing it to the natural balance.

Demand the best
So please, for your own sake, insist on a stone massage that includes hot as well as cold stones. Make sure you get a practitioner who is educated in the safe use of hot and cold, and who understands the underlying mechanisms and reasons for using both. If you're uncomfortable with cold, do tell your stone practitioner and the appliance of cold will naturally be adjusted accordingly.

Enjoy your next stone massage and see what difference cold makes.
Thermo-therapy in your shower

Using alternating temperatures can create amazing results to your health and well-being. It can help with aches and pains, strengthen the heart and circulation, support the lymphatic and immune systems, as well as increase your energy levels and ability to deal with stress. In short, daily thermo-therapy is good for you.

Not everybody has access to hot saunas and cold snow to do thermo-therapy. Luckily, there are several things that anyone can do at home, provided they have hot and cold water.

The easiest thing to do is an alternating shower. It's easy and quick and can without problems be implemented after the normal morning shower routines.

Alternating shower is good for the heart and overall relief of pain.

- Take a long hot shower and make sure you feel over heated
- Turn on the cold water, as cold as you can stand it
- Pour cold water from hip to ankle on the outside of the right leg, and go back up on the inside of the leg
- Repeat on the left leg
- Pour cold water from shoulder to wrist on outside of the right arm, and go back up on the inside of the arm
- Repeat on the left arm
- Pour cold water from hips to neck on the front side of the body and down the back from neck to hips
- Pour cold water over face and head
- Repeat this entire procedure three times, overheating and application of cold

When done, step out and dry off. If you did it correctly you'll be sweating.

If this seems a bit too much to start on, just start with the legs and slowly as you get more and more used to doing alternating showers, you can add more steps. Just doing the cold application on the feet and lower legs can make a big difference. Just keep in mind that you don't overheat the areas where you will not be pouring cold water.

How hot and how cold the water has to be fully depends on you. Make sure you go to the extremes, but not so much that it's intolerable and feels really bad.
More thermo-therapy at home

Using alternating temperatures can create amazing results to your health and well-being. It can help with aches and pains, strengthen the heart and circulation, support the lymphatic and immune systems, as well as increase your energy levels and ability to deal with stress. In short, daily thermo-therapy is good for you.

**Water Treading** is good for the lymphatic system and pain in feet and legs. All you need is a bathtub or large bucket filled with ice cold water which is deep enough to cover your lower legs.

- Stand in the water and begin to walk, bringing your knee all the way to chest with each step
- Continue to do so for 1-5 minutes
- Step out of the water and dry only between your toes, letting the feet and legs air dry before you put on socks and shoes.

The **Arm Plunge** is good for the heart as well as pain in arms and hands. A massage therapist's life-saver. What is needed is a sink or bucket filled with ice cold water, which is deep enough to cover your arms 10 cm (4 inches) above your elbow.

- Place your bent arms in the cold water, staying for 1-3 minutes - no more
- Take arms out of the water and brush off the water, and let the air dry them

Finally, for those of you who has the luxury of a bathtub you can do a **Hot Bath followed by Cold Application**. This treatment is good for isolated areas of pain.

You will need some more equipment, such as cold stones or cold packs, and moist heating packs can be used instead of going back into the tub the 2nd and 3rd time.

- Take a hot bath with Epsom salts and soak for at least 15-20 minutes, step out of the bath and dry off
- Place cold along the part of the body which is hurting and cover the rest of your body so you keep nicely warm
- Repeat three times

Applying the specific techniques when you have pains and aches might save you from taking painkillers or even a trip to the physiotherapist. If the pain persists or is strong, see a doctor. Be aware if you have any conditions where heat and cold might be contraindicated. Should you begin feel sick during any of these treatments, cease immediately. Are you in doubt, ask your doctor for advice.

Even if you don't suffer from any acute pains or aches, implementing thermo-therapy into your daily life will increase your overall well-being and strengthen your health.

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The benefits of stone massage and how it differs from other massage therapies

By Mary Nelson, founder of LaStone® Therapy

Many people do not understand the benefits of stone massage and have never experienced the deep healing provided by a session. They have experienced Swedish massage or a similar therapy, but may not know how wonderful and therapeutic a stone massage actually is. The type of stone massage technique that I will be discussing is LaStone®, which uses both hot and cold stones to bring relief and healing to the body.

Traditional Swedish massage and Shiatsu have a lot to offer. They will accelerate oxygen and nutrients, activate the circulatory system, improve the digestive system, relax the body, assist the mind to let go and the spirit can soar to new levels of meditation. So if all this is happening in a traditional massage why choose to experience a stone session, what makes a stone massage different than one of these that I have listed?

Hydrotherapy or Thermotherapeutics or thermotherapy as some refer to it has been floating around the world of healing for thousands of years. Basically it involves the use of water and various temperatures to relieve pain in the treating of illness. In the methodologies of LaStone® therapy we refer to it as Geo-thermal therapy which is the application of heated and chilled stones to the body for therapeutic purposes.

The main component of hydrotherapy is water in its numerous forms of temperature and it plays an important role in almost all fields of science, including physics, chemistry, and biology. The application of temperature to the body to aid it in the healing process has been recorded as early as ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilizations. Hydrotherapy was revived during the 19th century in Germany, Father Sebastian Kneipp http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sebastian_Kneipp.jpg taught the practical use of hydrotherapy in everyday life. His methods are still in use today throughout Germany and around the world. In modern times hydrotherapy is a common practice in the physical therapy offices and many hospitals where they are treating arthritis, strains, sprains, burns, musculoskeletal disorders as well as for stroke patients with paralysis and the list goes on for it has a wide range of benefits to support the body in the healing process.
LaStone® is clinically the application of Geo-Thermal therapy, to the body using heated stones and alternating with chilled stones to bring about a chemical release within the body’s systems. Spiritually the use of heated and chilled stones to our body will aid in balancing our chakras and recharging our souls with Mother Earth energies as we perceive the wonder of the temperature and the stone’s individual vibrations entering our bodies.

Many hot stone massages do not alternate between the various degrees of temperature and only offer hot or warm stones to the body; resulting in a relaxing experience and one that is capable of moving some blood around in the local regions where the heated stone were applied. This type of stone massage is suitable for the client who has no health issues, no pain to relieve, and no inflammation to move out of the body and only wants to relax and feel comfortable.

For those who are looking for a deeper sense of themselves through ceremony, who seek ways to make a chemical change within their constitution and begin the healing process then LaStone® is the methodology that can administer such an experience, for the body will journey through multiple levels of healing as the blood, the lymphatic fluids and digestive juices all interact with the stones being applied to the body at various degrees in temperature throughout the session.

Adjusting temperatures in bodywork to aid clients in healing has always been beneficial. LaStone® Therapy is a contemporary approach to alternating temperatures in massage, it is a multifaceted technique designed to benefit client and therapist at once. The therapeutic potential of this treatment goes beyond measure. The physiological benefits of alternating hot and cold temperatures to the body have long been scientifically and medically proven. As mentioned early about the Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilizations and Father Sebastian Kneipp you can also find evidence of other ancient cultures using various forms of water, liquid, steam and ice to heal the body. These three forms of water are the mediums used in hydrotherapy http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrotherapy. LaStone® Therapy capitalizes on these traditional practices with a current approach.

The many different types of stones used are the medium and the various temperatures are the message. This “vascular gymnastics” that is achieved by the use of alternating hot and cold stones in a massage aids the circulatory system, endocrine system and digestive systems in assisting the body in self-healing and goes beyond what bare hands can achieve in the traditional body therapies.

In a full session heated and chilled stones will line your back as you lie face up, both temperatures will rest on your front chakras and you will be massaged by the skilled hands of your LaStone® therapist with heated stones along your arms, legs, hands, feet, face and back. The placement of the heated and chilled stones will be determined by your therapist clinical understanding of what each temperature can be offered to your body at that particular moment, taking into consideration your health concerns and personal goals for the outcome of the stone session. At times chilled stones will be applied to your body via the appropriate massage technique if inflammation is present, or arthritis, strains, sprains, and fibromyalgia are challenging your well-being. All along heated stones will rest in supportive areas of your body to help keep you warm and allow the body to relax into the therapeutic aspects that cold stones are able to achieve by way of Geo-thermal therapy supporting the body to begin the healing process.

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A LaStone® session goes beyond the physical experience of typical massage, and enters deeper dimensions of relaxation, health and well-being, creating a positive approach to Body-Mind-Spirit philosophy. To remember what it was like as a child to lie upon the earth and feel as though nothing was wrong in life. People are searching far and wide for that sense of well-being, that connection with the power and peace of life. We have forgotten where to find it. In this fast paced society that we live in, we rarely take time to go outdoors and rest and feel the vibration of our mother, the Earth. It is too convenient to go to the gym; some of us even have workout equipment at home. Missing the true meaning as to why one goes outside, not realizing that we need the connection to Mother Earth. Receiving a session supports us in reconnecting to Mother Earth. Feeling cradled and protected by our Earth Mother as we experience her seasons through the various temperatures being offered to the body as the sessions unfolds.

Not only is LaStone® an absolute solution to aiding the client’s bodies to begin the healing process the therapists themselves are supporting their own hands in healing when holding the stones. By using alternating temperatures with the stones the strain and injuries to the wrists and thumbs that body therapists experience daily begin to heal and the therapist’s hands become stronger as the inflammation leaves their hands and wrists all the while they are treating their clients with heated and chilled stones. Thus LaStone® goes beyond any traditional therapies for both the therapist and the client benefit from the science and spirit of the stones.

I recommend that you find a certified LaStone® therapist or a stone therapist that understands the science behind how alternating temperatures to the body will aid in the healing process and incorporates some form of ceremony or energy work in the sessions they are licensed in doing. For this type of stone massage will offer you a safe environment to experience the vibrations of the stones from Mother Earth, her seasons through the temperature and be balanced as your energy centers accept the ceremony being offered to your body.