

# Water Therapy: Muscle Rejuvenation

## Rejuvenate, Revitalize, and Relax

When you exercise, your muscles naturally develop thousands of microscopic tears. Metabolic waste such as lactic acid builds up in each muscle, leading to fatigue and soreness. The cells in the muscles will naturally rebuild and after doing so, each tear becomes slightly stronger muscle tissue. With unusual stress on a muscle, these microscopic tears will be larger and the lactic acid build-up greater. This leads to muscle discomfort and pain. Extended rest will help complete the healing process as discussed above but **with the help of hot water, we can accelerate this natural healing process.** The increased blood flow and dilated blood vessels work to carry lactic acid away from the muscles faster, easing fatigue. As the hot water promotes relaxation of the muscles, pressure is released in the surrounding nerves and blood vessels to bring substantial pain relief.

Similar benefits apply to sore joints. When joints are damaged or inflamed due to injury (or arthritis), muscles buckle-up and become tenser in an effort to protect themselves. Hot water immersion can help **alleviate joint pain and resulting muscle soreness**, as well as muscle pulls and strains. In addition, the buoyancy of water reduces stress on the body's muscles because they are being asked to support only about one tenth our actual body weight. With underwater movement and light exercise of the ailing areas, pain is alleviated, and the muscles become more limber by providing a level of resistance to assist in re-building muscle strength.

Just as you would not try to stretch a rubber band when it was cold, you have probably learned you should not try stretching the muscles in your body when cold. A soak in hot water **before exercise** can really loosen your muscles and increase your flexibility. And, if you do happen to overextend, the same hot water treatment can work to repair the damage to the muscles. Many find their best sessions happen **after** a good soak in hot water.

*Health Tip* - Instead of grabbing for an over-the-counter pain reliever or a topical ointment filled with questionable ingredients (such as IcyHot or BenGay), try the natural healing forces of a hot tub for healthier muscle and joint pain relief.

"I'm in for yoga on Tuesday night and Thursday morning and used to have trouble with some soreness on Wednesdays... [but] since I starting soaking in my tub in the evening before bed and outside in the early mornings, I haven't been sore at all. I feel like I've discovered the fountain of youth." RS, New Hampshire

The taxing exercise of professional athletes requires trainers and therapists to help athletes recover and rejuvenate their bodies for continuing exercise. These professional trainers and therapists often recommend warm water therapy to aid in recovery and sometimes to limber up an athlete before exercise. You don't have to be a professional athlete to enjoy the soothing, rejuvenating action of warm water therapy. Weekend athletes, skiers, baseball players and golfers alike can enjoy the benefits of a warm relaxing soak after exercise while the muscles are still warm and in doing so, sometimes eliminate muscle soreness altogether.