

Harbinger is York University's peer counselling and referral service. Drop in at 214 Vanier residence or phone 667-3059-3632. Open 10-6, Monday to Friday.

Harbinger's column

Rub-a-dub-dub



By LINDSAY COBB

Romans met in groups to do it. Cleopatra did it with milk. It fell out of style in the middle ages and the Japanese developed it into an art.

Bathing has a universal fascination. There are salt baths, sitz baths, sand baths, clay baths and Kneipp baths. You can go sea bathing or visit mountain spas. Entire towns have centered around mineral springs. All this activity refers only to bathing proper and not to showers, saunas and sweat lodges, another world in itself.

The therapeutic qualities of bathing are legion due to the qualities of skin. The skin receives about one third of all blood circulating through the body. It is almost entirely waterproof, providing an efficient closely regulated thermal barrier and participating in the dissipation of water and in the temperature regulatory functions of the body.

Here we have the answer to why baths are effective. Via the medium of contact, i.e. SKIN, baths do their work. They detoxify, increase circulation, energize and relax. They are great balancers.

Hot baths make you sweat. Sweat is composed of waste products. Its organic constituents include urea, uric acid, amino acids, ammonia, sugar, lactic acid, and ascorbic acid. To sweat is to purify yourself.

The relaxation of a hot bath works in this way. Sweating relieves your body of pain — producing waste material. In particular sweat contains lactic acid, the waste product of muscle activity and bane of all athletes. With the removal of lactic acid muscles lose their soreness.

Bathing in herbs can increase the

purifying effect of a hot bath. There are a number of sudorifics, herbs which make you sweat, such as yarrow, nettle, and pennyroyal. Combine two or all three herbs. Put equal amounts of your choices into a cheesecloth bag. Using an enamel pot (metal will leach out the herbs), boil in water for five minutes; simmer for 20 minutes. Pour into your bath. Prepare to soak and enjoy.

Since skin receives about one third of all circulating blood and is a thermal regulator, bathing affects these functions, too. Alternating hot and cold showers will increase your circulation and are a good morning wakeup.

Start with a hot shower for three minutes. Change to a cold shower for 30 seconds. Alternate three times in a row and forget about needing coffee. Upon stopping, briskly dry off with a rough towel or

massage your skin with a bristle brush. This will remove the dead skin cells and bring blood to the surface of your skin.

The skin can also absorb needed nutrients — thus explaining the popularity of soaking in seawater, mineral springs and salts. You can improvise by partially filling a tub with cool water and adding three to four pounds of sea salt (available at health food stores). Before getting in, make sure the salts are completely dissolved or they may irritate sensitive membranes. Lacking sea salt, substitute the following ingredients, courtesy of Dr. Paavo Airola:

- 3½ lbs. common salt
- ½ lb. magnesium chloride
- ½ lb. Epsom salts.

All these ingredients will be in your local drugstore.

Happy Splashing!



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