

Q&A with Julia: Any side effects with colon hydrotherapy.

Q: Can anyone advise me: are there any (negative) side effects with colonic hydrotherapy?

A: Here's my tuppence worth.

It depends what you mean by negative. Colon hydrotherapy has been shown to be an extremely safe practice. Much safer than conventional medical practice, in fact. (See note 1 below)

Some colon hydro therapists will emphasise the positive results of colon hydrotherapy. Me too, in the past. Why? Because I am *so* enthusiastic about the longer term benefits of colonics, that I don't want anyone to be turned off from having them *just* because they are afraid of the temporary effects. My experience from carrying out around 2000 treatments is that colonics are benign and beneficial.

However, it is a cleansing process, and therefore can give rise to healing reactions (see information piece: *What is a healing crisis?*)

So although colonics are a health practice, not a medical procedure, the idea of *full disclosure* from medical practice is sensible and prudent. People do need to know the mechanics of colonics, so they are prepared. Medics call this *informed consent*. And colon hydro therapists should be up front about the practice, screening out those who are obviously reluctant bunnies; not at all sure it's for them. (There's a difference between the understandable concern many people will have about a procedure that's new to them, and the deeper anxiety some people will have about the process.)

In practice, since people self -select, I have not found this an issue; it quickly becomes clear in the course of the first consultation if people are arriving at the clinic only because *someone else* thinks it's a good idea. I am careful not to push people to do something they would *really* rather not. Of course, there are also some contraindications to the use of colonics- they are beyond the scope of discussion of this answer.

So what could be some side effects? Some in the sense that, in my experience not everyone has them, but they should be explained.

Colonics act on the para-sympathetic nervous system, by way of direct stimulation of the vagus nerve. There may be some temporary discomfort. This is analogous to an unfit person beginning training at the gym. I know from my own experience that right at the outset of fitness training, it's not smooth sailing. Muscles cramp, body aches, and sometimes I have even felt a little sick. Not nice, but not untoward either. Colonics also may lead to temporary discomfort such as bloating, cramping and nausea. Why? Because at one level it's training the lazy smooth muscles of the colon to regain their muscular tone. It helps the person reconnect with the feeling of peristalsis (bowel muscle movement). It's an internal fitness training, which trains the inside abdominal muscles to work in a productive way, especially in combo with abdominal massage.

Colonic hydrotherapy works by contraction/expansion of muscle tissue, reflex stimulation and manipulation of the bowel and surrounding tissues. That is why it is **not** habit forming. When done in combination with individual and sound dietary advices it is effective at training the bowel, improving its elasticity and restoring function.

Colonics clinics are not big business; those who offer it work very hard to earn a living. There are easier ways of making money. I know offering a much-needed service primarily motivates my colleagues in this vocation.

Ironically, what is big business (multi billions worth) are laxatives and anti-diarrheal drugs, the level of usage of which can accurately be termed abuse. They have far more dangerous side effects. Laxatives work by causing an irritation response, which makes it habit forming. Their addictive nature and over-use also contributes to mineral loss and electrolyte imbalances.

There is now lots of research to show the systemic, far reaching positive influence of bowel flora on health, specifically when it comes to hormonal balance and immunity. But hormonal health is on the decline. Why? The finger can be pointed at antibiotics, overuse of which has been implicated in contributing to deterioration of hormonal and immune functions. Result of these factors? Epidemic rates of development of a number of diseases *of civilization* such as obesity, diabetes, cancer, thrush, infertility etc.

Some folk argue that colonics wash out the gut bacteria, good and bad. The anecdotal evidence of my clients, and of colon hydro therapists in general, is that when people have dysfunction of the colon (e.g. constipation, IBS etc.) the bad bacteria predominates. Unless there is some clearing out of the terrain, the good bacteria are simply crowded out in an inhospitable environment. So, provided the colonics are not carried out indiscriminately, washing out some of the bacteria is a good, not bad thing.

Its sensible practice of course to implant beneficial bacteria post- colonic. See info piece: *'Why are probiotics a good idea after having a colonic?'*

Note 1: "Medical error is the third most frequent cause of death in Britain after cancer and heart disease, killing up to 40,000 people a year - about four times more than die from all other types of accident."

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