

BLOG.SQD

What is **Contrast Bathing**?

Contrast bathing is “exercising” tissues with quick changes in temperature, to help with pain and injury rehab - especially repetitive strain injuries.

How does **Contrast Bathing** work?

Contrast bathing can be used to reduce swelling around

injuries or to aid recovery from exercise, It can also significantly improve muscle recovery following exercise. It does this by reducing the levels of blood lactate concentration by quickly changing tissue temperature from hot to cold and back again. This is usually achieved with hot and cold water by dunking a limb or even immersing the whole body.



When should I use **Contrast Bathing**?

You should use contrast bathing for injury recovery. This method is good, cheap, safe, and simple. I promise that it feels better than it sounds, when it's done right. The point is to force your tissues to adapt to the sudden changes, which is stimulatory and requires a lot of metabolic activity. Contrasting constitutes a gentle tissue workout: stimulation without stress, strong sensations without movement. This technique is proven helpful for a body part that needs rest while it heals. so the best common candidates for contrasting are:

- Plantar fasciitis
- Shin splints
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Tennis elbow
- Achilles tendinitis

Knees are a little trickier, but still easy enough to contrast with a little creativity, so two more good candidates are the runner's knee conditions, iliotibial band syndrome and patellofemoral syndrome.

How to contrast: **delivery systems and procedures**

There are many ways to heat up and cool your body parts, I encourage you to use your imagination and all the tools at your disposal. Bear in mind that immersion is always better than a flow or spray whenever possible. You want to surround the body part, major delivery systems for temperature are:

- **Immersion:** Sinks, buckets or bath tub
- **Wrapping:** Heating pads, ice packs or soaked towels
- **Pouring/spraying:** Immersion in a stream from a faucet, containers, removable shower head or hose

Contrasting should follow this guideline:

Three to Six alternations between heating and cooling:

- 1 **2 minutes of heating:** Hot
- 2 **1 minute of cooling:** Cold
- 3 **2 minutes of heating:** Hotter!
- 4 **1 minute of cooling:** Colder!
- 5 **2 minutes of heating:** Hot as you can handle
- 6 **1 minute of cooling:** Cold as you can handle



Cold sounds scary to a lot of people, but you'll be surprised at how tolerable it is when you're properly pre-warmed.

Cristiano Ronaldo doesn't seem to have a problem with it.

Are there any risks Contrast Bathing?

The only risk are the obvious ones:

- Burns from the water if it is too hot.
- Skin damage from the water if water is too cold.

Ensuring the water is at the correct temperature before using is the best way to mitigate the risks.

Here is what we do know from the research: Most studies alternate between water temperatures of **45-68° F** for the Cold Water and **93-106° F** for the Hot Water.

A few tips and rules of thumb for Contrast Bathing

- **Stay warm.** You generally want to be more thorough with your heat: at least a minute, but as long as five minutes depending on how efficient your heating method is. Heat is more comforting and relaxing than cooling, obviously, and inadequate heating is the most common thing people do wrong with contrasting.
- **Finish with cold.** You should usually finish a contrast session with cold, particularly if you suspect that you might be a little inflamed. Never finish with heat if you're concerned about aggravating inflammation. You might choose to finish with heat if your priority is to have a more relaxing experience.
- **Stretch when hot.** Not that stretching is all that it's cracked up to be, but if you choose to stretch, do it after or even *during* the heating. If you have to stop heating to stretch, *reheat* after stretching before moving on to the cold.
- **Dial it up as you go.** It is desirable (though not always practical) to increase the intensity of the contrast as you go: that is, the hot gets hotter and the cold gets colder.

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