

Did You Say Colonic?

By Terri L. Saunders

Colon hydrotherapy, commonly known as colonics, is actually an ancient healing technique that was first documented historically in the Edwin Papyrus of 1700 B.C. and the Ebers Papyrus, an Egyptian medical document of the 14th Century B.C.. In these documents instructions for enemas were given using hollow reeds and river water to rinse waste from the colon. Hippocrates (known as the father of modern medicine), Galen and Pare also recommended enemas as an important healing modality. The Essene Gospel of the 3rd Century stated, "The uncleanness within is greater than the uncleanness without. He who cleanses himself without, but within remains unclean, is like a tomb that outward is painted fair, but is within full of all manner of horrible uncleannesses and abominations."

The 17th Century has been called the "age of clysters [enemas]" where it was common practice in Parisian society to have as many as three or four enemas a day. It was their belief that an internal washing or "lavement" was essential to well-being. By the end of the 19th century the discovery of rubber inspired the development of more sophisticated colon hydrotherapy equipment that vastly improved the ability to cleanse the colon.

In 1917, Dr. John Kellogg reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association that in his treatment of gastrointestinal disease in over 40,000 patients, he had used surgery in only 20 cases. The rest were healed as a result of colonics, diet and exercise. Later Dr. James Wiltsie, also a proponent of colon hydrotherapy stated, "Our knowledge of the normal and abnormal physiology of the colon, and of its pathology and management has not kept pace with that of many organs and systems of the body. As long as we continue to assume that the colon will take care of itself, just that long will we remain in complete ignorance of perhaps the most important source of ill health in the whole body."

The use of colon hydrotherapy in medical practice reached its apex in the 1920's and 1930's then gradually declined in the remaining years of the 20th Century. Dr. Bernard Jensen, a chiropractor and naturopath who taught the benefits of colon cleansing, commented on the unfortunate demise of this valuable therapy stating, "In times past, knowledge of the bowel was more widespread and people were taught how to care for the bowel. Somehow, bowel wisdom got lost and it became something that no one wanted to talk about anymore." Colon hydrotherapist Cheryl Ashby agrees, adding that the public's lack of knowledge of colonics and "the widely held belief by many orthodox medical practitioners that such treatments are no longer useful may be the single most important factor in the current ill-health of the American population."

Herbalists and naturopaths understand that a clean, well-functioning colon is the key to health. We even have a saying, "Death begins in the colon." Not surprisingly, Americans spend 400 million dollars annually on laxatives. It is estimated that this year 130,000 new cases of colon cancer will be diagnosed, making colon cancer second only to lung cancer in men and breast cancer in women as the leading cause of death. In truth, a toxic colon is often at the root of most disease. Currently, it is estimated that at least 2 million Americans suffer colon-related diseases including colitis,

ileitis, diverticulitis and irritable bowel syndrome.

Conventional medical doctors typically prescribe drugs and perform surgery to deal with these conditions. In fact, approximately 100,000 colostomies are performed each year.

The colon, or large intestine, is the end portion of the digestive tract measuring about 5 1/2 feet long and 2 1/2 inches wide in the average adult. The primary functions of the colon are to conserve water and eliminate waste from the body. In a healthy colon friendly bacteria or microflora provided by fermented foods reside there, serving to synthesize nutrients such as B vitamins and vitamin K, and protect the body from harmful bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites. A healthy colon eliminates waste within 24 hours after each meal, ensuring that undigested food and the byproducts of digestion do not stick around long enough to decompose and putrefy inside the body or attract harmful pathogens that thrive in a toxic environment.

Unfortunately, due to dehydration, stress, drug intake, environmental toxins, improper food combining, and a low-fiber, acidic diet including refined flours, pasteurized dairy, sugar, hydrogenated fats, alcohol, caffeine, sodas, processed or synthetic foods and preservatives, many people have toxic colons filled with sludge, hardened fecal matter, mucous, pathogens and parasites. In fact the average person of normal weight and height may have 10 to 25 pounds of dried fecal matter in their colon. A person who is overweight, or has allergies and other chronic health problems will carry a lot more than that in their colon. The distended abdomen fondly referred to as the "beer belly" is actually a repository for pounds of toxic waste.

Symptoms of a toxic colon are numerous including constipation, diarrhea, nausea, irritable bowel syndrome, acne and other skin problems, headaches, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, irritability, depression, frequent colds, food cravings, body odor, bad breath, allergies, asthma, prostate problems, menstrual problems, glandular imbalance, immune system weakness, arthritis, backaches, insomnia, hypertension, hemorrhoids, bloating, gas, indigestion, and lack of mental clarity. Excess mucous is a sure sign of colon toxicity, as mucous is the body's way of getting rid of undigested foods, toxic substances and disease-causing pathogens. We say that "if there's mucous up north, there's mucous down south." A runny nose or cough is the body's way of trying to eliminate mucous that originated in the colon.

Accumulation of hardened fecal matter and mucous on the colon wall prevent the beneficial bacteria from making a home there and instead harbor harmful pathogens, dead cellular tissue and parasites. This inhibits the muscular action of the colon causing sluggish bowel movements, constipation, and inflammation. The weakened colon or "leaky gut" allows toxins from the bowel to be reabsorbed into the body through a process called autointoxication where they circulate in the bloodstream and overburden the lymphatic system, liver, lungs, kidneys and skin. Autointoxication is the primary cause of illness including all degenerative disease such as cancer, heart disease, endocrine disorders and immune system weakness.

Aided by detoxifying herbs, enzymes, adequate water intake and a healthy diet including fiber and fermented foods,

colon hydrotherapy is the quickest, most efficient way to cleanse the colon and initiate healing in the body. Performed by a qualified colon hydrotherapist, a colonic can be a relaxing and revitalizing experience. Contrary to popular belief, colon hydrotherapy does not cause dependence. It does encourage the restoration of the natural function of the colon by strengthening muscle tone and peristalsis which is essential for proper elimination. A clean colon also encourages the colonization of beneficial microflora which enhance digestion and immunity.

A colon hydrotherapy session takes about 45 minutes to an hour. During that time, the client lies comfortably on a treatment table while water is safely and gently infused into the rectum. Unlike an enema which fills only the lower sigmoid portion of the bowel, a colonic can effectively cleanse the entire bowel.

In a closed colon hydrotherapy system, the therapist is always present. A disposable speculum is gently inserted into the rectum through which warm water passes into and out of the colon. Measured amounts of water are carefully allowed to flow in while a valve can be switched allowing water and waste to flow out, so there is no need to get up to go to the bathroom. Modern state of the art equipment have water purification systems and individual disposables which eliminate any possible contamination to the client, a lighted viewing chamber and a system for adding solutions to the water. Some colon therapists add oxygen to the water to help eliminate parasites and oxygenate the body. Sometimes coffee is infused to release mucous and cleanse the liver. Catnip tea can be added to stimulate peristalsis (muscle contraction), and liquid chlorophyll and acidophilus can be infused into the colon at the end of the session for nutritive benefit.

The therapist may also gently massage the abdomen during the colonic to dislodge impacted fecal matter. During the session water temperature and pressure are monitored by the therapist and can be varied to stimulate peristalsis and release toxins which helps to tonify a sluggish bowel.

Most colon therapists recommend a series of colonics done about a week apart. A minimum of six colonics is generally advised, while 10 to 12 sessions are recommended for the average person, and more may be needed to address serious or chronic health problems. Generally, depending on age and condition, the body doesn't begin to eliminate the older fecal material and toxic buildup until after the fourth or fifth session. The amount of sessions needed is unique to the individual and can be determined by the client and therapist. After an initial series which can be done at any time, colonics can be done periodically to maintain health. The spring and fall are the best times for maintenance sessions, as this is when the body naturally initiates the detoxification process indicated by the excess mucous associated with seasonal allergies.

Colonics are not recommended for individuals on kidney dialysis, or with congestive heart failure or Crohn's disease. Check with your physician first if you have any other serious health condition, though unfortunately, many physicians are not properly informed about colon hydrotherapy.

Recently, colon therapists have begun to employ bio-electric lymphatic therapy before each colonic. Referred to as our second circulatory system, the lymphatic system is a central component of the immune system, and protects the body by draining and filtering out waste. Congested or

sluggish lymph glands can impede the body's ability to detoxify. Devices such as the Lustre and Derma Ray gently break up congested lymph electro-magnetically stimulating the lymph system to dump toxins into the colon so they can more readily be eliminated. A lymphatic drainage session takes about an hour and is especially relaxing. Experience has shown that after using this technique the release from colonics is more thorough and efficient.

Fasting on fresh vegetable juice and liquids for 24 hours prior to a colonic facilitates the cleansing process. It is not uncommon to experience a detox reaction shortly after a colonic, particularly in the beginning sessions. Headaches, fatigue, skin breakouts, respiratory congestion, and temporary constipation may occur as toxins that have been stored deep in the tissues are mobilized to be released from the body. Increased water and fiber intake can aid this process, or another colonic can be scheduled sooner to provide relief.

The benefits of colon hydrotherapy can be extraordinary, especially when combined with a healthy diet. As the body releases debilitating toxins and the colon is restored to optimal function, constipation and digestive disorders become a thing of the past. The immune system becomes stronger, allergies go away and the skin clears and becomes vibrant. Pain and inflammation disappear, and other chronic health conditions finally have a chance to heal. There is also a noticeable increase in energy, mental clarity and inner peace that comes with a balanced well-functioning body. Open channels of elimination pave the way for emotional release resulting in transformation on all levels. Refer to www.i-act.org to locate a certified colon hydrotherapist near you.

Terri Saunders is an Herbalist, Nutritional Consultant and Certified Natural Health Professional in Charlottesville, Virginia where she does consultations, phone consultations and classes on natural healing. For information on consultations, products and classes call Sunrise Herb Shoppe at 434-984-2665, email sunherb@mindspring.com, or see website at www.sunriseherbshop.com.