

STEAM INHALATION TREATMENT: Water Cure for Prevention

MECHANISM:

- Increases expectoration by liquefying the mucus from the respiratory tract with hot, wet air
- Heats the mucosa via the condensing steam circulation to the respiratory tract
- If used, aromatic oils can increase penetration of medicinal benefits (e.g. antiseptics, anti-microbial)

STEAM INHALATION IS HELPFUL FOR:

- Congestion anywhere along the respiratory tract, especially with dry, thick secretions
- Painful, tight chest during respiratory infection
- Sore throat
- Cough, laryngitis
- Spasmodic breathing

MATERIALS

- Tea kettle or pot with boiling water
- Aromatic oils, e.g. eucalyptus, thyme, peppermint (optional)
- Blanket/ sheet/ towel
- Newspaper funnel (optional)
- Bowl
- Alternative: Simply a shower or bathtub

PROCEDURE

1. Assemble materials.
2. Fill kettle or pot with water and bring it to a boil.
3. Add boiling water to a bowl. Add aromatic essential oils, if desired – starting with 2-3 drops. If you do not have essential oils on hand, you can simply use 1-2 pinches of dried thyme.
4. Cover your entire head with a towel and place your face over the steam from the bowl—not too close or you'll irritate your skin—and keep your eyes closed.
5. Optional: Roll a section of newspaper into a large cone and place over the bowl to direct the steam towards your face.
6. Breathe the steam slowly and deeply.
7. Periodically use a cold damp towel to cool your face and forehead.
8. Continue for 15-30 minutes or until the steam ceases rising. You can do this three times per day.
9. At the end of the treatment, dry yourself and rest for 30 minutes.

*If you use a shower or bathtub, all you have to do is add essential oils directly to the floor of the shower/tub. You may start with 2-3 drops.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Do not use steam inhalation if you have congestive heart failure, cardiac asthma and other serious heart problems. Do not use if you are very young or very old, or if you are too frail to cope with the heat of steam.

References:

Boyle, Wade, ND and Saine, André, ND. Lectures in Naturopathic Hydrotherapy. Eclectic Medical Publications, Sandy, OR, 1988.