

# Wonder OF Water

BY KELLY  
HEITZ

## Integrating Water Therapy into Your Spa Menu



**Watsu aqua body work and therapy at Remede Spa at the St. Regis Punta Mita is a popular and relaxing treatment for guests.**

here is an old Slovakian proverb that states, “Pure water is the world’s first and foremost medicine.” Nothing could be truer than these words. Our bodies need water to survive; our planet consists of more than 75 percent water; and water has been used by nearly every culture and civilization in history as a tool for health and healing.

While it is highly debated where the word spa originated from, popular belief is that “spa” is an acronym for the Latin phrase “salus per aquae,” which means health through water. It is also widely thought that the word may have come from the town of Spa, Belgium, which has been known for its baths since Roman times.

“Across the continents, people use water to cleanse and rejuvenate, to soothe and heal,” notes Lidya Wati, founder and president of Spa Réveil, a day spa located in Austin, Texas. “Often, thermal water is used as part of wellness traditions in many cultures.”



### Back to Basics

“The word ‘spa’ suggests water being the core of healing element, and having water as part of the treatment offerings reflects the true meaning and purpose of spa,” continues Wati. “Water is not only cleansing and invigorating, but also soothing and relaxing. When combined, these benefits offer a wonderful healing and pampering experience for spa guests.”

At Spa Réveil, vichy therapy is by far the most popular spa treatment. Guests enjoy the horizontal vichy shower treatment as part of larger spa packages that use natural exfoliants to detoxify, promote skin tissue regeneration, and enhance skin vitality.

Those natural elements are exactly what spa guests are looking for these days, according to Kanruethai Roongruang, vice president and executive director of Banyan Tree Spa & Gallery in Phuket, Thailand. “Water has natural healing powers and beneficial properties, and is crucial for vitality and



Varying pressure and temperature, like in the Rainforest Treatment Banyan Tree Spa & Gallery, can calm the mind and invigorate the senses.

“Water has natural healing powers and beneficial properties, and is crucial for vitality and good health.”

good health. By going back to basics, guests can enjoy the many advantages water provides to ease discomfort and promote physical well-being.”

She adds that variations such as pressure and temperature work wonders to quiet and soothe or to stimulate and invigorate the body. At Banyan Tree Spa & Gallery, for example, guests are treated to an experience called The Rainforest. It is a complete hydrothermal experience combining the best of European spa and hydrothermal therapy with time-honored Asian wellness philosophies to create a calming haven dedicated to holistic rejuvenation.

From vichy showers to nature experiences, the possibilities for incorporating water therapies into your spa menu are vast. But what about the latest craze to make waves?

An article published on time.com entitled *Float Hopes: The Strange New Science of Floating*, dives into the new but telling research surrounding flotation therapy. Research by Dr. Justin Feinstein, neuropsychologist and founder of the Float Clinic and Research Center at the Laureate Institute for Brain Research in Tulsa, Oklahoma, shows that floating therapy can help people with stress disorders like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



**Water therapy boosts the immune system, stimulates the metabolism, circulatory and nervous systems, improves physical conditioning and invigorates the whole body.**

“Humans have a strong connection with water, and it is extremely important to our lives,” says Alejandro Ortiz, spa director at Remède Spa at The St. Regis Punta Mita, which is the only resort in Mexico that offers flotation therapy. “Therefore, the benefits that come with water therapy treatments are becoming very popular, which in fact is turning back to the basics and the origins of spas.”

### More Water Benefits

“Hydrotherapy is considered one of the top treatments within alternative medicine,” says Dr. Luis Felipe Menezes Martins, medical director at Kurotel Longevity Medical Center and Spa in Gramado, Brazil. “Water therapy can promote countless health benefits linked to the rehabilitation of several medical conditions, especially on the locomotive system as it reduces the gravity impact on spine and joints. It offers a natural resistance on physical exercises and improves muscular strength, relieves pain and promotes a deep state of relaxation for both body and mind.”

Kurotel’s Water Circuit combines the best of flotation therapy and therapeutic baths to give guests a full hydro experience that includes a jet pool, mud bath, salt bath, ice fountain and an antioxidant foam shower.

Similar to Kurotel, Wati has brought the concept to her spa in Texas to rave customer reviews. “Contrasting hot and cold water has not been a well-known therapy in the U.S., but it is therapeutic in that it increases circulation, helps eliminate toxins and strengthens the immune system.”

### Alleviating Apprehension

The use of water near certain types of spa equipment, the hazard of wet surfaces, as well as the dangers surrounding large pools are all important aspects to think about before

“Water therapy boosts the immune system, stimulates the metabolism, circulatory and nervous systems. improves physical conditioning and invigorates the whole body.”

implementing water treatments into a facility. Proper design, equipment and training can alleviate those worries and make the environment safe for both guests and employees.

“Safety can be a concern and people might be worried about the potential dangers associated with injury and improper use of facilities,” says Roongruang. “Our hydro facilities are well-designed with safety of guests as top priority. We also have safety precautions in place, and we always make sure that spa associates are stationed at the facility to render assistance and advice when required.”

Even with safety precautions and all the known benefits to water therapies, there are still plenty of apprehensions from



**Horizontal vichy showers are among the most popular treatments at Spa Reveil in Austin, Texas.**

guests. As soothing as water is to some, it can be a source of fear for others.

“I have found that many guests are reluctant to try water therapy for fear of the unknown,” says Wati. “They do not know what to expect. The best way to alleviate this is to provide as much information as possible to first-time guests on what to expect during the treatment, the benefits of the treatment, and how best to enjoy the experience. It is also important that the therapist checks with the guest throughout the treatment to ensure their comfort.”

According to Dr. Felipe, it shouldn't be hard convincing guests of the many benefits of water therapies.

“There are so many benefits. Water therapy boosts the immune systems, stimulates the metabolism, circulatory and nervous system, improves physical conditioning and invigorates the whole body. It can also improve local inflammatory processes and systems and promote physical and mental well-being,” he says. “The use of water for therapeutic reasons is probably as old as humanity and is considered one of the basic methods of alternative medicine.” ■

# Adding Water Therapy to Your Menu

Adding water treatments to an already comprehensive spa menu can be easy when coordinating them with services that coincide with the rejuvenating benefits of water.



“Pairing flotation therapy with meditation and yoga can continue the mental and physical health benefits even after drying off.”

**ALEJANDRO ORTIZ**, Spa Director Remède Spa  
The St. Regis Punta Mita, Nayarit, Mexico



“A combination of massage and scrub is ideal to accompany the water therapy for maximized benefits.”

**KANRUETHAI ROONGRUANG**, Vice President and Executive Director  
Banyan Tree Resorts and Spas (Thailand) Co. Ltd., Phuket, Thailand



“Water therapies can easily be taken home with special extremities baths: immersing arms or legs in cold water after exercising can be extremely beneficial.”

**DR. LUIS FELIPE MENEZES MARTINS**, Medical Director  
Kurotel Longevity Medical Center and Spa, Gramado, Brazil



“We offer Hammam (Turkish steam room) with eucalyptus as part of our amenities. We use milk proteins and essential oils in our hydrotherapy treatments as well as nourishing lemongrass, espresso and other natural scrubs rich in antioxidant properties for body exfoliation with our vichy therapy.”

**LIDYA WATI**, Founder and President  
Spa Réveil, Austin, Texas