

COLD CASE

Cryotherapy is quickly gaining prominence as a treatment for numerous ailments

HEALTH ADVICE



Cryotherapy (introduced to SA through CryoLiving in Cape Town), involves exposing the body to liquid nitrogen vapour (which ranges in temperature from -120°C to -160°C) for up to three minutes. Here are a few benefits:

SPORTS INJURIES AND PERFORMANCE

Cryotherapy is used in sports medicine to help athletes manage and recover from their injuries, both chronic and acute. The process decreases swelling and inflammation, which leads to a reduction in stiffness and pain. It also improves their ability to do physical therapy, which means faster healing time and a quicker journey back onto the field.

INFLAMMATORY DISEASES

The immune system protects the body with specialised cells called cytokines. Their job

is to aid cell-to-cell communication in immune responses and stimulate the movement of cells towards sites of inflammation, infection and trauma. But sometimes the immune system becomes compromised and ends up attacking the body itself, which can lead to an autoimmune disease. The result is chronic inflammation, which could lead to tissue destruction. Several studies have shown cryotherapy to be an effective treatment for several inflammatory diseases, such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, and also fibromyalgia.

PAIN

A 2012 study by Dr Winfried Papenfuss showed that a three-minute stay in the CryoSauna can inhibit chronic pain for several hours and after several exposures, the effect is enhanced and the pain relief can last for several months. Longer term use has been shown to adapt how the body

perceives pain stimuli, offering benefits in chronic pain management. As not everyone feels pain the exact same way, treatment is individualised and results are improved by combining behavioural, physical and psychological interventions.

DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

As the body interprets the extreme cold as a threat, it releases beta endorphins. According to a 1976 study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, this is 18 to 33 times more powerful than morphine, which means it can lead to a feeling of euphoria. Furthermore, a study published in the Archives of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy in 2008 showed that statistically significant improvements in symptoms of anxiety and depression were seen in patients after a course of 15 daily whole-body cryotherapy treatments when compared with a control group taking medication alone. **Man**