



From the Inside Out

Top Treatments to Nurture the Gut

By Caroline Canetti

While pampering and relaxation are staples of the spa experience, underneath it all the spa industry is a wellness industry. This is why more spas are adding treatments, programs and nutritional counseling related to gut health — because a healthy gut is a large part of ensuring overall health and well-being.

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Colonics

One way to ensure a healthy gut is to flush out the pipes, so to speak, through colonic irrigation. Colonics (a.k.a. colon therapy, colon hydrotherapy, colon therapy, colon irrigation and colon cleansing) involve a therapist or technician inserting a tube in the rectum of the client to insert water that then flushes out the toxins.

Love Thyself Day Spa in Richardson, Texas, offers a variety of treatments geared toward gut health, including two colon cleansers: Colon Hydrotherapy (\$85 for one session, \$430 for a series of six, or \$985 for a series of 15) and Colon Implants (60 minutes, \$35 or a series of five for \$100). The first colonic appointment includes a 30-minute consultation, 60-minute treatment and approximately 30 minutes for post-treatment instructions and recommendations.





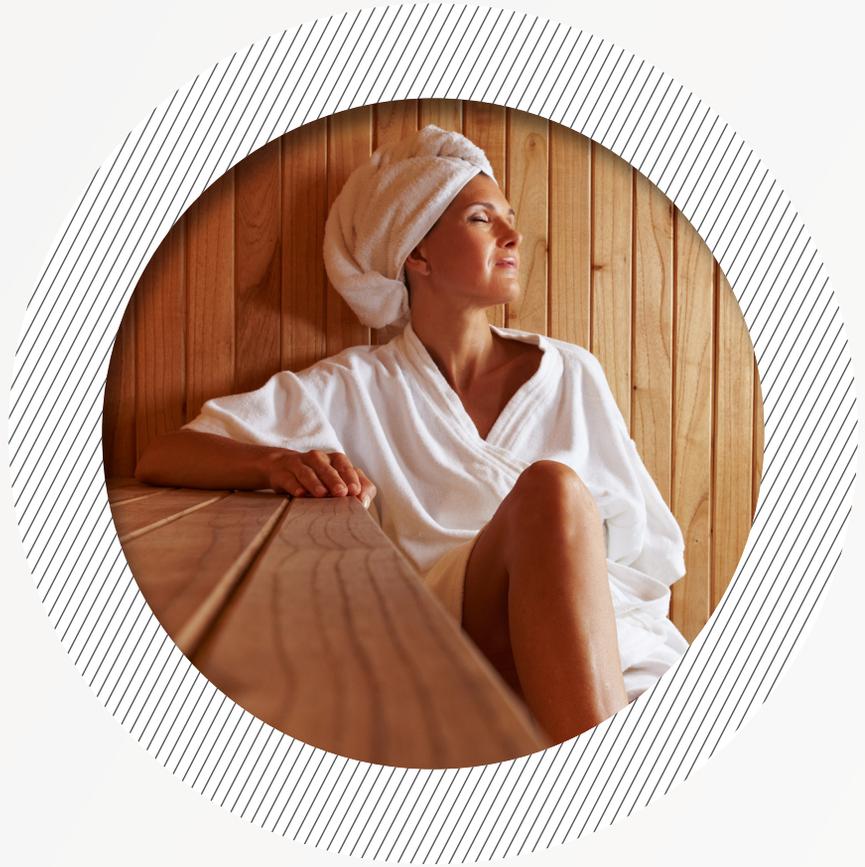
The Colon Implant service works as a post-Colon Hydrotherapy add-on. "A colonic implant is the infusion of a small amount of concentrated liquid solution into the colon through the rectum, retained for a certain amount of time, for the purpose of direct absorption through the colon, bringing greater and more immediate benefits, rather than the fluid having to travel the entire digestive tract first," explains owner Lisa Weeks.

This liquid is typically made up of any of the following or combinations thereof: probiotics, wheatgrass, herbal teas, therapeutic essential oils, aloe vera, or other nutritive components. "Some of the benefits of a colonic implant is that it soothes the mucosal lining (especially if irritated), gives direct nourishment to the colon and stimulates the liver and gallbladder to produce bile, which further cleanses the digestive tract," adds Weeks.

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** See "Toxin Flush Out" on page 91 for more information on colon hydrotherapy and requirements for facilities and practitioners.*

Infrared Saunas Painful Therapy



Infrared sauna therapy differs greatly from a traditional sauna, which simply heats up the body. Infrared, on the other hand, stimulates the immune system, thereby working on the lymphatic system and penetrating the tissues more deeply. “Not all infrared systems are the same as most only giving one single spectrum. The best type of sauna for therapeutic use is infrared sauna that offers three spectrum levels (i.e., near, mid and far infrared),” says Weeks, who offers a 30-minute Infrared Heat Therapy session for \$45 or a series of 10 for \$425.

Firm Body Evolution (FBE) in West Hollywood, Calif., offers infrared sauna sessions to newcomers for \$99 for one-week unlimited. The regular weekly price is \$200, one session is \$50 and a 10-pack costs \$390. Each session is 30 minutes. “Infrared penetrates and helps detox the gut on a cellular level. This ‘interior’ heat increases oxygen flow to the gut, helping it to heal and function better,” says Jourdan Rystrom, manager, director and vice president of FBE.

Abdominal Massage

Abdominal massage serves a variety of purposes, so it's key to understand why the client is interested in this service before beginning, as this determines the pressure and types of strokes you should deliver.

"For example," explains Weeks, "one purpose could be to move lymph from the area, so therefore, a lighter touch and specific directional movement toward the lymph nodes. Or it could be done to help break up a hardened mass in the colon, thus, a deeper massage into the muscles. Or it can be done as part of a detox program, purely to enhance overall waste removal in the body."

In all cases, she adds, the therapist should follow the direction of the colon, so as not to move either waste or gas backwards to interfere with normal bodily functioning. Love Thyself's Abdominal Massage is a 30-minute add on for \$35, but it's also included in the spa's Abdominal Packs (30-minute minimum, but one to two hours ideally). This costs \$35 for one session or \$150 for a series of five. The Abdominal Pack includes abdominal massage, mini-reflexology and pure medicinal essential oils (Castor Oil Abdominal Pack, Therapeutic Mud Pack and Detoxifying Herbal Pack).

Resplendent Day Spa in Long Beach, Calif., offers the Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy (75 minutes, \$175 for first visit, \$135 for follow-up visits), which is modeled after Dr. Rosita Arvigo's technique based on Mayan medicine. While it's primary use is for reproductive, uterine and ovarian health, it's also good for digestion.

"We are working the upper abdomen for the digestion specifically," explains owner Yvonne Hernandez. "The whole abdomen is massaged as

if we are working for all concerns using the Arvigo techniques. Dr. Arvigo, in her advanced class, added more layers to this therapy, especially for digestion along with a specific diet."



One must complete advanced training in Arvigo techniques to become a Certified Arvigo Practitioner (CAP).



Detox Wraps

Two Bunch Palms Spa Resort in Desert Hot Springs, Calif., offers a Wrap/Massage Reboot (60 minutes for \$165, 90 minutes for \$209), which includes dry brushing to stimulate the lymph system and application of a castor oil pad to the abdomen before the client is cocooned in a warm wrap and treated to a nurturing scalp and foot massage.

“The castor oil has substances that help to clean the internal organs. In terms of ‘gut health,’ it calms and soothes nerves, reduces nerve inflammation, cleanses the liver and colon, releases constipation because it’s a strong laxative, but it also helps with mental stress, arthritis and relieves sore muscles,” says lead massage therapist Matthew Stramoski.



Nutritional Counseling

Gut health and proper nutrition go hand-in-hand, which is why many spa owners are also offering nutritional counseling, classes and one-off workshops.

“Because nutrition is so key to overall health, as well as the results of any and all services that we perform, along with the fact that most people either totally don’t know how, perhaps are not motivated, or could use some additional help in nutrition and in the practice



of preparing fresh living/plant-based foods, I wholeheartedly feel that every spa should have a kitchen, classroom and holistic nutritional expert in place for hands-on teaching and counseling, to encourage wellness in both clients and staff," says Weeks.

Among Weeks' offerings at Love Thyself Day Spa are free 10-minute Recipe Demos and 60 to 90-minute Healthy Food Prep Classes for vegan and raw cuisine by the spa chef. Prices vary depending on the number of people in each class. Additionally, for clients receiving certain spa packages, and depending upon length, they include either Healthy & Delicious Refreshments or a Healthy & Delicious Meal, both prepared by the spa chef. This pricing is included in the spa package.

Lastly, Holistic Nutritional Counseling (60 minutes, \$85) includes customized support for individuals or families. Some basic nutritional counseling is also provided for those enrolled in a wellness plan or detox series.



If you plan to offer nutritional counseling services at your spa, partner with professionals who have a degree or certificate in nutrition or holistic nutritional counseling.

Acupuncture and Meditation

SenSpa in San Francisco, Calif., employs a naturopathic and Chinese medical doctor to examine and treat clients with "leaky guts" via the use of acupuncture and even meditation.

For instance, meditation has helped their clients with thyroid disease because constipation is a problem for those with thyroid problems. SenSpa's wellness experts, naturopath doctor and acupuncturist use meditation as a tool in their sessions (like a guided meditation during the service) and recommend it as take-

away advice as well (such as sitting and focusing on their breath for five to 15 minutes in the morning). It is not offered as a stand-alone service.

"Meditation helps to relax the muscles, which can cause backup," says Spa Director Jenean Laroche. "Our naturopathic doctor does have training and an interest in pelvic pain syndromes, which are often tied to leaky gut. Our doctor also advises thyroid clients to go gluten-free, which also helps in the gut area and eases the symptoms. As a massage therapist, she treats the abdominal

and pelvis muscles to help with those syndromes.”

Acupuncture also plays a big role in the treatment of gut health. “Acupuncture reduces inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract (GI) tract, breaking the cycle of inflammation and increased permeability. It also increases stomach acid secretions, helps to break down food before it enters the small intestine and increases digestive function, which reduces the time that toxins can enter the bloodstream,” explains SenSpa’s acupuncture and Ayurveda practitioner Gayatri Bhatnagar. The spa offers an 80-minute acupuncture session for \$165 for first-time clients and \$115 for all subsequent sessions.

Acupuncture is also known to reduce abdominal pain, bloating and intestinal inflammation, increase gastrointestinal strength, stop chronic diarrhea, or increase bowel movements in the case of chronic constipation. “It’s highly effective in treating most digestive disorders including: irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn’s Disease, ulcerative colitis, food allergies and sensitivities, chronic constipation/diarrhea, ulcers, heartburn, GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), lactose intolerance and more,” adds Bhatnagar.



Acupuncture sessions must be performed by certified acupuncture practitioners.

Practitioners who provide meditation guidance should be trained and certified in meditation instruction.

Some spas have taken gut health one step further, incorporating gut treatments into other wellness programs.

At La Casa Spa and Wellness Center, owner Jane Goldberg, Ph.D., a licensed psychologist and certified psychoanalyst, explains their Day of Detox (3.5 hours, \$245) offering, which includes a colonic, massage and floatation experience.

“We have a standard form that clients fill out when they come in for a colonic,” Goldberg says. “The colon therapist will ask the client about bowel functioning. Throughout the colonic the therapist gives feedback on what she is seeing and what it means.” Clients at La Casa Spa maintain results through cleansing products and probiotics, also sold at the spa.

At The Hippocrates Health Institute of Hawaii, The Life Transformation Program incorporates elements of a gut health program. Prices vary because each program is completely customized and accommodation levels are distinct to each client.

Brian Clement, Ph.D., L.N., explains how gut health comes into play in their health assessment in customizing each guest’s health and longevity enhancing program.

“One of the most critical aspects is the maintenance and increase of healthy bacteria in the gut since two thirds of our body is bacteria and the immune system is generated for this intestinal flora. It is pinnacle to make sure that homeostasis and vitality reigns... application of certain foods and pre- and probiotic supplement has proven to be helpful in establishing the necessary balance.”