

POST-WORKOUT RITUALS

Fast-track your recovery with the latest innovative post-workout tech that's loved by the pros and approved by the *Women's Fitness* team

Words: Joanna Ebsworth

LED LIGHT THERAPY

What is it? Red light therapy (RLT) – or photobiomodulation therapy, to give it its scientific name – is a non-invasive treatment that uses specific

wavelengths of light to penetrate the skin and target cells for various therapeutic purposes. Those familiar with the latest skincare trends will know about the anti-ageing benefits of LED face masks to boost collagen production and reduce fine lines, but you might not be aware that RLT goes much further than skin-deep: it can also stimulate healing and help you recover faster from workouts, which might explain why Jessica Ennis-Hill is a fan, along with former *WF* cover girl and CrossFit superstar Sara Sigmundsdóttir.



CrossFit athlete Sara Sigmundsdóttir uses the Kineon MOVE+ Pro to relieve pain



TRY THIS

Kineon The Move+ Pro LED & Laser
(£480, kineon.io)

Unlike conventional LED therapy, Kineon's Move+ utilises both red and infrared light as well as LEDs and lasers to reduce pain in as little as five minutes, and stimulate healing and cellular regeneration of damaged tissues. FDA-cleared and backed by clinical trials, this wearable, hands-free device delivers targeted light straight to your joints and muscles for a genuine alternative to pharmaceutical solutions for pain relief. Editor-in-chief Sarah Sellens has been using it on her ankle and describes it as a 'very easy-to-use device that is comfortable during use and provides noticeable relief'.

Rouge Max G3
(£2,699.99, rougecare.co.uk)

This full-body length panel boasts 600 LEDs to deliver 660nm Red wavelengths for your skin and 850nm Near-Infrared wavelengths for deeper tissues, either simultaneously or independently. Mount it on your wall or upgrade to the version with the Pneumatic Horizontal Stand for £3,249.99 so you can lie underneath it (the celebrity favourite Rouge Bliss Red Light Therapy Bed (pictured left) costs a whopping £26,000!).



and tissues to enhance the efficiency of cells in various tissue types, helping everything from muscle recovery to joint health and even connective tissue.'

How does it work? 'At the cellular level, red light therapy works by stimulating the mitochondria - the powerhouse of the cell - to increase the production of adenosine triphosphate (ATP), which is vital for cellular energy and repair,' says Forrest Smith, CEO and co-founder of biotech company Kineon (kineon.io), who initially discovered the potential of red light therapy to alleviate chronic pain following his personal experience with an MCL tear. 'The light energy penetrates the skin and triggers biochemical changes that help reduce inflammation, enhance blood circulation, and promote faster recovery. Different wavelengths target different layers of the skin

What are the recovery

benefits? According to Smith, key advantages of red light therapy post-exercise include 'improved muscle recovery through enhanced circulation and ATP production to accelerate the repair of damaged tissues' - think, healing micro-tears caused by intense physical activity - as well as 'enhanced blood flow to speed up the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to aid faster recovery and performance improvement'. Additionally, Smith notes that RLT can 'reduce inflammation, alleviate muscle soreness and provide pain relief to improve post-workout comfort and mobility', as supported by a review of studies in *Pain Research and Management* that reported RLT provided pain relief from 20 to 70 per cent in musculoskeletal disorders, joint pain and chronic lower-back pain.



COMPRESSION BOOTS

What is it? They might look like futuristic full-length moon boots, but these self-inflating and deflating leg sleeves use dynamic air compression to

gently pulse and massage the legs. Once the reserve of people with circulation problems and elite athletes looking to bounce back from training or recuperate from injury – gymnast Simone Biles and tennis player Naomi Osaka are fans – they’re now a popular (and portable) recovery device with gym-goers, and even supermodels like Bella Hadid and Kendall Jenner seek relief from daily muscle fatigue and long-haul flights.

How does it work? ‘Compression boots use pulsing air compression to mimic natural muscle movements, a process called peristalsis,’ says Nikos Skevis, Hyperice master trainer and educational consultant (hyperice.com). ‘This dynamic compression helps to increase blood flow and enhance lymphatic drainage as the boots cycle through zones of pressure, creating a massage-like effect that promotes recovery and reduces inflammation.’ Sessions can last up to 60 minutes, but 20 minutes is usually enough to reap the benefits.

What are the recovery benefits?

As well as improving circulation to accelerate the delivery of oxygen and nutrients for faster recovery, Skevis says compression boots ‘reduce muscle soreness, fatigue and pain sensitivity after exercise, and help to decrease swelling by reducing fluid build-up’. Regular use, he adds, can lead to improved range of motion and reduced stiffness, while promoting faster recovery by accelerating muscle repair and helping warm up your legs before training to maximise performance.



Pulsio Compression (£299.99, pulsio.co.uk)

These boots feature four overlapping chambers from feet to thigh to direct blood flow upwards, and three fully customisable recovery cycles (Circulation, Sequence or Combination) to apply 60-to-200 mmHg of pressure. A visual display gives you control of sessions, while integrated intelligent pressure sensor technology ensures pressure is applied safely.



Naomi Osaka is a fan of compression boots

TRY THIS

Hyperice Normatec Premier (£999, hyperice.com)

Signifying a huge advancement in dynamic air compression technology, these powerful boots eliminate separate control units and hoses for a fully wireless experience. With seven intensity levels and five overlapping compression zones, they’re the lightest of all wireless dynamic compression boots on the market and can be uniquely used while charging for on-demand use when you need it most.







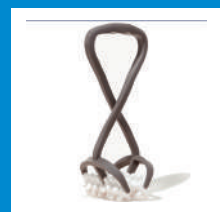
TRY THIS

Ballancer Gold Home
(£8,950, bodyballancer.co.uk)

This compact machine comes with the Ballancer pants (jacket sold separately) and features four pre-set massages with adjustable pressure and duration, including the 'Pre-treatment plus Ballancer' massage that works on the abdomen to clear the central lymphatics before switching to a more rapid wave-like massage to treat tired legs and improve circulation. Alternatively, visit the website to find your nearest clinic.

Sarah Chapman
The Bodylift
(£36, sarahchapman.com)

If your budget doesn't stretch to lymphatic drainage suits and in-salon treatments, try this hand-held body massager instead. With 12 unique rolling heads and 72 massaging nodules to massage deeply, it will help to ease muscle tension, stimulate blood circulation and stimulate the lymphatic system to efficiently drain toxins from the body, reduce puffiness and significantly improve the appearance of skin.



Photography: Various brands | *Available while stocks last, to UK residents only

LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE SUITS

What is it? Lymphatic drainage suits are high-tech inflatable compression garments that mimic the techniques of manual lymphatic drainage and were originally developed

to treat lymphoedema and lipoedema. The most famous suit of them all is the Body Ballancer (bodyballancer.co.uk), as seen on the likes of Jennifer Aniston, Paris Hilton and Chrissy Teigen on social media, and used by Dame Kelly Holmes and *Strictly* pro Dianne Buswell to combat muscle fatigue.

How does it work? 'Each Body Ballancer garment contains 24 individual air chambers which overlap to apply fluent compression strokes that target every inch of the treated area,' says Jules Willcocks, director of Body Ballancer Systems UK (bodyballancer.co.uk).

'This massage motion, with its specific direction of flow from the base of the limb to the torso, increases circulation, decongests problem areas and accelerates the removal of waste products and excess fluid via the lymphatic system to reduce the appearance of cellulite, improve skin tone, promote relaxation and boost immune function.'

What are the recovery benefits? Cosmetic benefits aside, Willcocks notes that the Body Ballancer 'provides an excellent form of "passive active recovery" after a hard workout because it helps to improve circulation by increasing the supply of oxygen-rich blood to the tissues, increase the capacity of the venous return system and stimulate lymphatic flow.' This, she says, significantly enhances the body's ability to get rid of metabolic wastes while at the same time helping to repay the oxygen debt, in turn speeding up recovery and improving performance.

ICE BATHS

What is it? Taking an ice bath involves submerging yourself in very cold water (ice is optional!) for a short period of time. With athletes and celebrities such as

Mel B, Eilish McColgan, Lady Gaga and Serena Williams all taking the plunge on social media, you'd be forgiven for thinking this form of cold water immersion is a new cultural phenomenon, but evidence of ice bathing for health benefits dates back centuries and across cultures from Ancient Egypt to Ancient Greece.

How does it work? 'When the body is submerged in cold water, blood vessels constrict, which helps to reduce inflammation and swelling in muscles and joints,' explains Gavin Teague, fitness enthusiast and LUMI Therapy co-founder (lumitherapy.co.uk). 'This process also boosts circulation as the body works to warm itself up once you get out of the cold water, delivering oxygen-rich blood to your tissues, which can speed up recovery after exercise and reduce muscle soreness. Plus, the shock of cold water also stimulates the nervous system, which can help improve mental clarity and mood.' Another key aspect of cold water therapy, says Teague, is its effect on stress hormones. 'When you're in cold water, your body releases endorphins, chemicals that make you feel good and reduce feelings of stress. Cold exposure also triggers the release of norepinephrine, a hormone and neurotransmitter that can boost energy levels and focus. Over time, cold water therapy can improve your body's ability to handle stress, making it a useful practice for both physical and mental health. But, it's



important to start gradually and consult with a healthcare professional beforehand, as cold water immersion may not be suitable for everyone'.

What are the recovery benefits?

Aside from reducing inflammation, improving circulation and aiding recovery from workouts, ice bathing can also help to boost your immune system and energy levels, improve mood and metabolic function, and promote a better night's sleep. If your workouts are designed for muscle gain, Teague recommends having an ice bath before training 'due to its ability to increase natural testosterone levels', while using an ice bath 'after a run is great for reducing lactic acid build-up'.

TRY THIS

Lumi Pod Pro
(£395, lumitherapy.co.uk)

This cutting-edge, hard-walled ice barrel is built using durable rubber and air-pocket insulation to enhance your cold therapy experience by keeping the outside weather from affecting the internal water temperature. Portable and roomy with a 450L capacity, just add ice or upgrade to the Pod Pro with miniULTRA Chiller (£1,290), for crystal clear water at a constant, icy temperature of 3°C.



READER OFFER

The Ice Co Ice Bath
(£125, theiceco.shop)

This five-star rated Ice Bath is made with five layers of cooling technology, comes with a thermo lid to safely maintain temperature and has an inflatable top ring for extra support when getting in and out. Portable and lightweight with a side drain tap and removable legs for easy transport and storage, *Women's Fitness* readers can now get their hands on The Ice Co Ice Bath for just £29* including delivery for a limited time. Head to theiceco.shop/products/ice-bath and use discount code WFITNESS29 to get yours!

