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Cold showers: Testing the waters

I dive into icy waters for two weeks to find out whether cold showers are a frosty miracle or a freezing nightmare.

I stared at the descending water like a deer in headlights, I don't have aquaphobia but if anything could trigger such a fear this would be it. With my heart pounding out my chest I gingerly climbed into the shower. The water fell on my shoulders like hundreds of icicles piercing my skin. I stood my ground in the icy waterfall for 7 minutes before stepping out shivering head to toe. This was far from the beneficial revitalisation that I was promised when researching the popular topic of cold-water bathing.

There are said to be numerous benefits to cold showers and baths, (although you wouldn't know when you're in them) from heightened energy levels to faster muscle recovery. They act as a form of therapy for the body as they increase blood circulation and revitalise the human body.

Frosty therapy is also said to enhance one's mood, as they increase the number of endorphins in the body, known as "feel good" hormones. Contributing to a reduction in stress and anxiety. Exposure to cold water also benefits the skin, it tightens the pores, preventing dirt and oil entering.

So now I've boasted about how beneficial cold showers are, it would be fitting for me to tell you how great my experience was, right? Wrong. There's certainly some small print that the scientific studies don't tell you about.

My first obstacle came in dealing with the cold water, it was incredibly difficult to stay under the freezing stream for more than a minute. Although it did improve the more showers I took.

My second problem was finding the motivation to stand in sub 15-degree water in mid-November twice a day. The process took up 30 minutes, the shower made up 7 of those minutes. Hopefully that gives you an idea of how I was dreading the icy rinse. It becomes a million times worse at night when you just want to roll into a warm bed before sleep. But then it dawns upon you that you must stand in the freezing cold for 10 minutes. It's an even crueller punishment when you notice the hot water is simply a dial turn away on the shower. Devastating.

The third challenge came in the form of my weak immune system. After 3-4 of the showers, I found myself with a runny nose and sore throat, otherwise known as a cold (which I still have while writing this). In complete fairness, it's something I should have expected given the time of year. But I obviously failed to pick up on this

Saying all this makes my experience sound extremely bleak, which wasn't necessarily true. There is certainly some truth in the increased energy levels, for example. Coming out of the shower I felt far more motivated and alert, setting me up for a more productive and enjoyable day.

There is also fact in the increased blood circulation. While in the shower, my heart thudded emphatically as the blood coursed through all areas of my body. Something you don't get with a warm shower.

Another positive point was the muscle recovery. Having started the experience with a sprained ankle, I felt a noticeable difference in pain relief after a few days. The science was triumphant in that area.

So, are cold showers pleasant? Hell no. Am I going to continue taking them? Bizarrely, I think I will. I know I'm blatantly contradicting myself but it's as if I've set myself the challenge to triumph cold showers. No matter what I will win. To put it bluntly, I have never regretted a cold shower, immediately after every single one I felt rewarded and revitalised.

I guess this experience has transformed me a bit? From a shivering start to an odd motivation to 'beat' some freezing water. It's all a bit weird if I'm being honest, if your smarter than me in any sense you should probably just have a nice hot bath.