Epsom salts used to relieve pain and stress

By: Dr. Alyssa Musgrove

Did you know magnesium is the second most abundant element in human cells? Magnesium impacts at least 300 enzymes and plays an important role in many bodily functions like muscle control, electrical impulses, energy production and the elimination of harmful toxins. While magnesium is not easily absorbed through the digestive tract, it is readily absorbed through the skin. That makes Epsom salt an ideal way to enjoy the associated health benefits of both magnesium and sulfates.

Epsom salt is not actually salt, but a mineral compound that can be broken down into magnesium, sulfur and oxygen. This compound was discovered in the early 17th century in a small town south of London named Epsom. The salt was acquired by boiling down spring water. While Epsom salt looks similar to table salt (small, colorless crystals), it is not drying to the skin. In fact, Epsom salt leaves skin feeling soft and silky. Epsom salt has been used diversely for many years. Here are just a few ways you can benefit from the use of Epsom salt:

**Relaxation**

Excess adrenaline, due to stress, is believed to drain magnesium from the body. Magnesium is necessary for the body to bind adequate amounts of serotonin (mood elevating chemical) in the brain, which creates a feeling of well-being and relaxation. When Epsom salts are added to a warm bath, the magnesium in the salts will soak through your skin to relax your muscles and your mind. Add 1-2 cups of Epsom salt to hot water and soak for at least 20 minutes. Lavender or eucalyptus oil can also be added to the salts before adding them to the water to increase the calming benefits.

If getting into a bath is not possible, soaking your feet in a basin of warm water and Epsom salts for 15 to 20 minutes can create a similar relaxing effect. The combination of a warm foot bath paired with deep breathing and a calming environment has immediate benefits to the body. Research has proven this technique to be extremely effective for lowering blood pressure temporarily by 8-10 points after the soak.

**Muscle Tension**

Muscle tension is a major cause of poor sleep. An Epsom salt bath before bed can help improve blood flow to your muscles, relax muscle tension and allow you to fall asleep with ease.

Athletes and those suffering from arthritis can also benefit from improved blood flow and circulation, which aides in muscle relaxation. Epsom salt baths are commonly suggested to ease aches and pains located in muscles and stiff joints. This includes discomfort caused by muscles in high demand and promotes a faster recovery from muscle strains or tightness.

For tension headache or neck pain relief, fill a cheesecloth or washcloth with Epsom salt and dip it in hot water for 20 seconds. Let it drip and cool off slightly before using it as a compress on the back of your neck. After the compress cools, place it back in the hot water and keep doing this for 7-10 minutes. Within ten minutes there should be a visible decrease in the amount of tension and pain.

**Colds and Flu**

For people fighting a cold or the flu, a warm bath tub soak with Epsom salts can shorten the duration of the ailment. The bath will increase the body’s temperature, causing you to sweat and aide in detoxification. The sulfates in Epsom salt assist the body in flushing out toxins.

**Itchy Scalp**

The magnesium in Epsom salt reduces itching, while the sulfur is a natural anti-bacterial agent. To relieve itchy/oily scalp, take half a handful of Epsom salts and scrub your scalp in the shower for 10 minutes, before washing it off and shampooing.

**Constipation**

Epsom salt is an FDA-approved laxative and commonly used to naturally relieve constipation. While *you should not* consume Epsom salt on a regular basis, you can use it as a temporary laxative by adding one teaspoon of Epsom salt to eight ounces of water. Stir the mixture and drink it all right away. Make sure to drink plenty of liquids while consuming Epsom salts to prevent dehydration.

**Gardening**

For healthier, stronger vegetable growth, add a tablespoon of Epsom salt to the soil underneath a plant. For indoor potted plants, dissolve two tablespoons of Epsom salt in a gallon of water and use once a month. For a chemical-free alternative to eliminate slugs, sprinkle some Epsom salt along walkways and patios.

**Housecleaning**

To clean dirty or stained surfaces like tile and grout, mix equal parts of liquid dish soap and Epsom salt. Apply the mixture to the surface and allow it to soak in for a couple minutes. Then scrub away the loosened dirt and rinse clean.

Epsom salt is very affordable and can be found at any grocery store or supermarket (usually in the pharmacy section or beauty aisle). Epsom salt should be stored at room temperature, and away from moisture and heat to prevent it from becoming compacted.

*Pathways to Healing specializes in holistic chiropractic care. Dr. Alyssa Musgrove draws on a variety of techniques, including chiropractic, kinesiology, nutrition, food allergy testing and lifestyle counseling to assist clients in achieving optimal health and wellness in one setting. In addition, the practice is committed to being a valuable source of information so that people can learn how to live a healthy lifestyle and prevent future illness. Pathways to Healing is located at 1022 Founders Row, Lake Oconee Village, Greensboro. The office can be reached at 706-454-2040.*