

Chapter Thirty

Air and Light Baths



ven among the adherents of Nature Cure there are those who think that air and light baths should be taken **out of doors** in warm weather only and in winter time only in well-heated rooms.

This is a mistake. The effect of the air bath upon the organism is subject to the same Law of Action and Reaction which governs the effects of water applications.

If the temperature of air or water is the same or nearly the same as that of the body, no reaction takes place, the conditions within the system remain the same. But if the temperature of air or water is considerably lower than the body temperature there will be a reaction.

In order to react against the chilling effect of cold air or water, the nerve centers which control the circulation send the blood to the surface in large quantities, flushing the skin with warm, red, arterial blood. The flow of the blood stream is greatly accelerated, and the elimination of morbid matter on the surface of the body is correspondingly increased.

What Is the Cause of Poor Skin Action?

Man is naturally an air animal. He breathes with the pores of the skin as well as with the lungs. However, the custom of hiding the body under dense, heavy clothing, thus excluding it from the life-giving influence of air and light, together with the habit of warm bathing, has weakened and enervated the skin of the average individual until it has lost its tonicity and is no longer capable of fulfilling its natural functions.

The compact, almost airtight layers of underwear and outer clothing made of cotton, wool, silk and leather prevent the ventilation of the skin and the escape of the morbid excretions of the body [this is even more true with our modern synthetic fibers]. The skin is an organ of absorption as well as of excretion; consequently the systemic poisons which are eliminated from the organism, if not removed by proper ventilation and bathing, are reabsorbed into the system just like the poisonous exhalations from the lungs are reinhaled and reabsorbed by people congregating in closed rooms or sleeping in unventilated bedrooms.

Who would think of keeping plants or animals continuously covered up, away from the air and light? We know they would wither and waste away, and die before long.

Nevertheless, civilized human beings have for ages hidden their bodies most carefully from sun and air, which are so necessary to their well-being. Is it any wonder that the human cuticle [skin] has become withered, enervated and atrophied, that it has lost the power to perform freely and efficiently its functions of elimination and absorption? Undoubtedly, this has much to do with the prevalence of disease.

In the iris of the eye the atrophied condition of the skin is indicated by a heavy, dark rim, the so-called scurf rim. It signifies that the skin has become anemic,¹ the surface circulation sluggish and defective, and that the elimination of morbid matter and systemic poisons through the skin is handicapped and retarded. This, in turn, causes autointoxication and favors the development of all kinds of acute and chronic diseases.

The Importance of the Skin as an Organ of Elimination

Of late physiologists have claimed that the skin is not of great importance as an organ of elimination. Common experience and the Diagnosis from the Eye teach us differently. The black rim seen more or less distinctly in the outer rim of the iris in the eyes of the majority of people has been called the scurf rim, because it was

¹ The word "anemic" is used here in its literal form to mean without blood. Today we tend to think of the term only to mean a state in which the amount of red blood cells in the body is below normal.

found that this dark rim appears in the iris after the suppression of scurfy and other forms of skin eruptions and after the external or internal use of lotions, ointments and medicines containing mercury, zinc, iodine, arsenic or other poisons which suppress or destroy the life and activity of the skin.

Therefore, when we see in the iris of a person a heavy scurf rim, we can tell him at once: "Your cuticle is in a sluggish, atrophied condition, the surface circulation and elimination through the skin are not good and as a result of this there is a strong tendency to auto-intoxication, you take cold easily, and suffer from chronic catarrhal conditions." Therefore, a heavy scurf rim frequently indicates what is ordinarily called "a scrofulous condition."

This certainly shows the great importance of the skin as an organ of elimination and the necessity of keeping it in the best possible condition. It explains why an atrophied skin has so much to do with the causation of disease and why in the treatment of both acute and chronic ailments **air and cold water produce such wonderful results.**

The favorite method of diagnosis employed by Father Kneipp, the great water cure apostle, was to examine the skin of his patients. If the "jacket," as he called it, was in fairly good condition, he predicted a speedy recovery. If he found the "jacket" shriveled and dry, weakened and atrophied, he shook his head and informed the patient that it would take much time and patience to restore him to health. He, as well as other pioneers of the Nature Cure movement, realized that elimination is the keynote in the treatment of acute and chronic diseases.

When Air Baths Should Be Taken

On awakening in the morning and several times during the day, if circumstances permit, expose your **nude** body to the invigorating influence of the open air and the sunlight.

During the hot season of the year and in tropical countries the best time for taking air and sun baths is the early morning and the late afternoon.

Persons suffering from insomnia or nervousness in any form are in nearly every case greatly benefited by a short air bath taken just before retiring, either preceding or following the evening sitz bath, as may be most convenient.

Where Air Baths Should Be Taken

If at all possible, air baths should be taken out of doors. Every house should have facilities for air and sun baths, that is, an enclosure where the nude body can be exposed to the open air and the sunlight.

If the air bath out of doors is impracticable, it may be taken in front of an open window. But indoor air, even in a well-ventilated room, is more or less stagnant and vitiated, and at best only a poor substitute for the open air.

It is the breezy, moving outdoor air, permeated with sunlight and rich in oxygen and ozone, that generates the electric and magnetic currents which are so stimulating and vitalizing to everything that draws the breath of life.

This is being realized more and more, and air-bath facilities will in the near future be considered as indispensable in the modern, up-to-date house as is now the bathroom.

We predict that before many years the roofs of apartment houses will be utilized for this purpose and people will wonder how they ever got along without the air bath [this prediction has come true in many of our larger cities].

Our sanitarium has two large enclosures on its roof, open above and surrounded on all sides by wooden lattice work, which allows the air to circulate freely, but excludes observation from neighboring roofs and windows and the streets below. One compartment is for men and one for women, each provided with gymnastic apparatus and a separate spray room.

How Air Baths Should Be Taken

At first expose the nude body to cool air only for short periods at a time, until the skin becomes inured to it.

Likewise, unless you are well used to the sun, take air baths of short duration, say from ten to twenty minutes, until your skin and your nervous system have become accustomed to the influence of heat and strong light. Prolonged exposure to the glaring rays of the noonday sun might produce severe burning of the skin, aside from a possible harmful effect upon the nervous system.

The novice should protect head and eyes against the fierce rays of sunlight. This is best accomplished by means of a wide-brimmed

straw hat of light weight. In cases where dizziness results from the effect of the heat upon the brain, a wet cloth may be swathed around the head or placed inside a straw hat.

It will be found very pleasurable and invigorating to take a cold shower or spray off and on during the sun bath and to allow the air to dry the body. This will also increase its electromagnetic effects upon the system.

The Friction Bath

While taking the air bath, the skin may be rubbed or brushed with a rough towel or a flesh brush in order to remove the excretions and the atrophied cuticle. The friction bath should always be followed by a spray or a cold-water rub.

At the time of the air bath, practice breathing exercises and the curative gymnastics appropriate to your condition. (See Chapters Twenty-Nine and Thirty-One on "Correct Breathing" and "Physical Exercise.")

If the air bath is taken at night, before retiring, the less active breathing exercises, as numbers 1, 3, 7 and 13, may be taken with good results, but all vigorous stimulating movements should be avoided.

As the plant prospers under the life-giving influence of water and light, so the cuticle of the human skin becomes alive and active under the natural stimulation of water, air and sunlight. From the foregoing paragraphs it will be seen why the air and light baths are regarded among the most important natural methods of treatment in all the great Nature Cure sanitariums of Germany.



