

The Wet Socks Treatment

The usual reaction people have given me to the idea of this wet socks treatment is horror. "I'm sick and you're saying I should put cold wet socks on my feet?!" Well, yes, I think it's something to try. Let me explain it...

We first heard about the Wet Socks Treatment from a local naturopath. Our son Elijah had a lot of ear infections (monthly) in his first and second years of life. We tried everything we knew to try, including seeing this naturopath. When she recommended the wet socks, however, I think we tried it one night but I had the feeling I was torturing my child with cold wet socks so I never followed through on subsequent nights or tried it again.

But then last month, when I had that cough I referred to in the last post, I decided to try it on myself after reading about it in a book on my shelf, [An Encyclopedia of Natural Healing for Children and Infants](#) by Mary Bove, N.D. She recommended the wet socks treatment as one possible treatment for bronchitis, which I felt I had and which I was desperate to heal without antibiotics. And you know, the treatment wasn't bad at all. It felt pretty good, in fact, and certainly not uncomfortable. And in the morning when I woke up with dry and warm feet, I did feel much less congested and my cough was easier.

You must follow the steps exactly, though. Here is what you do, and then I'll explain the thinking behind this simple home remedy:

Equipment:

Cotton Socks (wet)

Wool Socks (dry)

Sinkful or bucket of very cold water

Tub or bucket of very warm water

A warm bed

1. Put cotton socks (they don't need to be 100% cotton, just mostly) in a sink of cold, even iced if you want, water. Another option: Mary Bove, in the book

above, uses yarrow flower tea to soak the socks in, but I just used water. Yarrow flowers would get the circulation moving even better though. Let the socks soak till they're saturated.

2. Place your feet in a tub or bucket of very warm water, to warm the feet. Soak your feet as long as you want, but make sure the water stays warm and so do your feet.
3. After feet are warm, ring out the cotton socks and put them on your feet.
4. Have the dry wool socks right near you so you can them immediately put them on over and completely covering the wet socks.
5. Go right to bed, making sure the feet stay warm.
6. Do this for three nights in a row. You should feel relief from congestion, as well as dry and warm feet, in the morning.

What Herbalist and Naturopath Mary Bove says in the book is that "this will lessen congestion as the child sleeps." When I googled "wet socks treatment" I found the [Bastyr Center for Natural Health site recommending it](#). It's very much a naturopath thing, as far as I can tell! The Bastyr Center says this:

A natural method of stimulating the immune system and zapping a cold or flu is called the "wet sock treatment." The treatment, which is commonly prescribed by physicians at Bastyr Center for Natural Health, involves putting on ice-cold socks and ... are you ready for this? ... sleeping in them!

It may sound strange, but it works because it rallies the body's defenses, according to Jamey Wallace, ND, clinic medical director at Bastyr Center for Natural Health. And the best part about it is that it uses the healing power of nature and doesn't cost anything.

The treatment is known as a "heating compress," meaning that it's up to the

body to heat the cold, wet socks, says Dr. Wallace. "The body reacts to the cold socks by increasing blood circulation, which also stimulates the immune system. You have to 'rev up' the immune system, so it's ready for battle against the affliction or condition."

This treatment acts to reflexively increase the circulation and decrease congestion in the upper respiratory passages, head and throat. It also has a sedating action, and many patients report that they sleep much better during the treatment. The treatment is also effective for pain relief and increases the healing response during acute infections.

The wet sock treatment is used in conjunction with other modalities to treat inflammation, infection or soreness of the throat, headaches, migraines, nasal congestion, upper respiratory infections, coughs, bronchitis and sinus infections.

It's best to start the wet sock treatment on first day of an illness, ideally repeating it for three nights in a row. People with chronic conditions or a compromised immunity should consult with a doctor before starting the wet sock treatment. Dr. Wallace also points out, "The wet sock treatment is only one component of an integrated treatment plan that includes hydration, proper nutrition and immunity-boosting supplements."

I think the wet socks treatment is an important home remedy for people to know about. It's simple, cheap and can be very effective in easing respiratory congestion and fever. In my case of bronchitis, it really seemed to help. The next morning, I was much less congested. I repeated the treatment for three nights, as recommended, and each morning I was a little better than the day before.

