Positive effect of winter baths in outdoor water reservoirs

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Introduction

The walrus is a common term for a person who performs hardening baths in ice-cold water of outdoor water reservoirs during winter. Winter swimming in cold water is similar to popular cryotherapy but differs in the way of transferring heat energy. Even a short immersion is associated with many positive effects on the human body. It increases the flexibility of red blood cells, has a positive impact on working of cardiovascular system and helps with joint pain as a component of cryotherapy. Additionally, endorphins which are released during winter baths improve the mood whose reduction is noticeable in autumn and winter. The study was conducted to confirm the positive effect of such baths among people practicing them in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship (Mika, 1996; C. Mila-Kierzenkowska et al., 2011; Celestyna Mila-Kierzenkowska et al., 2016; Teległów et al., 2008, 2014; Wesołowski, Gackowska, Woźniak, Mila-Kierzenkowska, & Jurecka, 2013; Zeman, 2005).

Materials and Methods

50 people who took winter baths and lived in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship took part in the survey. 64% of the surveyed group were men and 36% women. The largest group were people aged 30 to 40 (42%) and the smallest people over 60 (4%). Subjects were asked about the reasons why they decided to take winter baths, and about the positive and negative effects of them.

Results

The main reason why the participants decided to start the winter baths was the desire to temper the body. Another of the reasons presented by the respondents is the desire to improve the mood during the winter, decrease the risk of disease and the increase the level of physical activity in the winter. A few of the respondents also mentioned the desire to try something new and prove themselves.

The benefits of regular bathing are: increased immunity, improved well-being and mood, increased levels of physical activity, increased tolerance to low temperatures, reduced incidence of diseases, mental strengthening and making new acquaintances.

Only two subjects have confirmed the negative effects of winter baths, but the mentioned reasons (less time for the family and increasing addiction on the bath) do not indicate an adverse effect on the body.

Discussion

There is still a small number of available literature related to the influence of winter baths on health. Previous studies confirm the positive effect of winter baths, the beneficial effect of reduced temperatures on the body is also known. The conducted surveys confirm the positive effect of winter baths and the lack of side effects. It seems prospective to carry out medical research on members of walrus clubs (C. Mila-Kierzenkowska et al., 2011; Teległów et al., 2014; Wesołowski et al., 2013).

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