



It's a wrap!

We've always loved our heat wraps... that incredible combination of heat and aromatherapy seems like just the right thing for sore muscles... and now, two current medical studies prove how powerfully healing heatwraps can be!

Research Finds Heat Wraps More Effective Than Analgesics for Back Pain

Low level heat wrap therapy is more effective than over-the-counter oral medications for relieving low back pain, according to the results of a nationwide study led by a sports medicine researcher at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ).

The results showed that the low level heat wrap therapy provided significantly more pain relief beginning on the first day of treatment than the oral analgesics and that the effects lasted more than 48 hours after the treatment was completed.

"Although clinical guidelines in the U.S. have recommended the use of self-administered heat, this is the first study to compare the effectiveness of topical heat treatment versus oral analgesics for treating muscle pain and stiffness," according to Dr. Scott F. Nadler, director of sports medicine at UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School in Newark and co-investigator of the study.

"Confirming that this treatment is effective is important to patients because it gives them a treatment option that does not have the potential risk to the liver, kidneys, and gastrointestinal tract than can accompany inappropriate analgesic usage," said Dr. Nadler, who is also an associate professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at the medical school.

The study, published in the journal *Spine*, was conducted at 11 test sites nationwide in a randomized, active-controlled clinical trial. Low back pain is the leading cause of disability in people under age 45 and the cost to society is estimated to range from \$20 to \$50 billion per year, according to statistics provided by the Agency for Healthcare Policy and Research of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The participants in the study were between the ages of 18 and 55 years of age and were evaluated to be experiencing at least moderate back pain.

The researchers found that the heat wrap group showed significant improvements in pain relief, lateral trunk flexibility, muscle stiffness and disability compared with the patients taking ibuprofen or acetaminophen.

"On the first day of treatment, the heat wrap gave patients greater pain relief -- 33% and 52%, respectively -- when compared to ibuprofen and acetaminophen," Dr. Nadler said. "The heat wrap also improved trunk flexibility -- 71 and 48 percent, respectively -- compared with ibuprofen and acetaminophen after just two days of treatment."

Sources: arthritissupport.com, The Washington Post, Spine magazine