

## **Salt Therapy**

Take it with a grain of salt We bathe in it, exfoliate with it and it's a staple on the dinner table. Now the healing powers of salt are being touted by the salt caves springing up across North America. Salt therapy dates back to 16th century Poland, when salt miners appeared to find reprieve from respiratory problems. Since then, natural and man-made salt caves have been opened worldwide for their healing benefits.

Magda Rutkowski, manager of a salt cave in Mississauga that opened last spring, is familiar with the concept from her native country, Poland. The cave features salt mined from the Himalayas, the Dead Sea and Poland. "Salt boasts anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory qualities," she notes. Salt caves are promoted as a treatment for circulatory problems, hypertension, psoriasis and other skin inflammations, as well as depression and fatigue. "Salt reduces negative ions in the air, producing positive energy and reducing stress," suggests Magda.

The caves are constructed using walls of solid rock salt with salt crystals generously covering the floor. Visitors can relax in lounge chairs with blankets, which are provided, though guests are advised to wear warm socks and a sweater as the temperature is kept at 18°C to maintain a proper microclimate to optimize the healing and regenerative environment.

Many salt caves offer massage treatments and yoga and meditation classes. Some create a spa environment using water features, and the Galos Cave in Chicago even has a restaurant. Where diners can enjoy their meal while gazing at beautiful salt carvings that form part of the décor.

Spas that give back The spa industry is widely recognized for caring and nurturing.

Many spas give to philanthropic initiatives, donating used towels, linens and robes to local shelters and hosting fundraising events on site.

Rosewater Spas in Ontario has introduced a program called, "Put the Roses Back in Your Cheeks." Each Wednesday, the Burlington and Oakville locations offer their signature treatment, the Rosewater Wrap and Nap, free of charge to recovering cancer patients to help ease the effects of chemotherapy and/or radiation on the skin. The treatment includes a facial, scalp massage and organic thalassotherapy cocoon body wrap.

The Phoenix Renewal Centre & Spa also found an innovative way to assist the Skin Cancer Foundation Fundraiser during Edmonton's Fashion Week. The spa hosted a 10-minute runway show, "Dying for Beauty," using make-up to illustrate the devastating effects of tanning and skin cancer. The show was fascinating, shocking and so effective that the foundation is incorporating photos and video of the event as part of its ongoing educational program.