

BYRDIE

THE/THIRTY

These 9 Expert-Approved Epsom Salt Uses Will Change Your Wellness Routine

BY KAITLYN MCLINTOCK | April 18, 2018

Epsom salt is ages old and has humbly kept its place in the bathroom cabinets of celebs, professional athletes, and probably even your grandma, too. Speaking of grandmas, I know my own considers Epsom salt to be an end-all cure. She uses it to garden, to do laundry, and pretty much to do everything else, too. So while I've been in close proximity to it my whole life, I've never actually taken advantage of the myriad benefits behind it. To be honest, I didn't actually know that much about it at all—like what it's actually made of.

According to dermatologist **William Kwan**, "Epsom salt is mostly comprised of magnesium sulfate and really contains no salt. People have been using Epsom salts for health and beauty for hundreds of years." Since it's soluble, the magnesium becomes dissolved in whatever water it comes in contact with. It's this fact that Sarah Snyder, founder and aesthetician of Apothecary Company, says makes Epsom salt so useful. "Your body is able to soak up that magnesium in the Epsom salt through your largest organ (your skin), sometimes even better than if you were to take it internally," she says. "Many people are very deficient in magnesium these days, and the more stress you have in your life, chances are that you are deficient as well since the body burns through magnesium more quickly with higher amounts of stress. So getting it in through an Epsom salt bath is a super-easy way to get additional magnesium into your system." From there, the benefits are manifold.



1. USE IT TO ALLEVIATE ACHES AND PAINS

The most traditional use for Epsom salts is as a bath soak, and for good reason. According to Snyder, the magnesium absorbs into the skin to relieve general aches and pains. "They are excellent for reducing pain, which is why they are the perfect salt to use in a bath after a strenuous workout," she says. Add some Epsom salts to a bath if you're feeling sore, achy from a cold, or generally just under the weather. It's an easy way to alleviate minor pains without taking extra medication.

2. USE IT TO CALM INFLAMMATION

Speaking of aches and pains, an Epsom salt bath soak can also help decrease inflammation in your body. "Magnesium plays a very big role in the body and is needed for more than 300 different body enzymatic reactions," explains Lamees Hamdan, MD, founder and CEO of Shiffa. She calls out Epsom salt's inflammation-reducing properties, specifically. It's just another reason why it's so helpful in soothing a sore, post-workout body. It even "helps muscle and nerve functions."

3. USE IT TO BOOST YOUR MOOD

If you experience chronic stress in your life (like all of us do in the postmodern age), Epsom salt can actually boost your mood. Again, it's all thanks to the magnesium that's absorbed into your skin. "It helps boost serotonin levels (your feel-good hormone)," Hamdan says. "I add two cups Epsom salts to a bath and two tablespoons of my Shiffa Soothing Body Oil (\$63)—to combat the dryness of the hot water and bath salts—and soak for 15 mins, then towel-dry. You can bathe up to twice a week with Epsom salts if you require—I do it weekly."



4. USE IT TO EXFOLIATE YOUR SKIN

You can also use Epsom salt as a DIY body scrub exfoliant. It's normally inexpensive and widely accessible, which makes it a perfect substitute for other high-end body scrubs. "Just mix some Epsom salts with a gentle cleanser to help exfoliate the face or body," Kwan says. "It can also be mixed with a bit of olive oil for an alternative exfoliant."

5. USE IT TO EXFOLIATE YOUR SCALP

Just as it can slough off dead skin and surface debris from your skin, Epsom salt can act as a scalp scrub substitute since it can remove product buildup from your scalp and hair. Just mix with a little water or conditioner and gently massage into your scalp. After, make sure you rinse well to remove any remaining grains from your hair.

6. USE IT TO HEAL MINOR SKIN IRRITATIONS

Many people swear by Epsom salt for treating minor skin irritations, like poison ivy, bee stings, sunburn, splinters, and more. "Dissolve quite a bit of Epsom salt in a small bowl with four to six cups of water, and soak the affected area for 20 minutes," says Cordelia Smith, founder of Formulary 55. Snyder agrees: "Definitely use it with caution and try it out on a small area diluted with some water to see how you tolerate it first since everyone is different, but I think

people would be surprised by the difference it can make with so many different conditions," she says.

7. USE IT TO DETOXYFY YOUR BODY

If there's one thing we've already established it's that magnesium is beneficial to the body in many different ways. But what I wasn't aware of is that it even works to detoxify the body. "Epsom salts can also be used to detoxify heavy metals from the body and can even help with regulating blood sugar," Snyder tells me. That's exactly why I'll be reaching for my package of Dr Teal's Restore and Replenish Epsom Salt (\$5) next time I feel sluggish and run-down or am suffering due to one too many drinks the night before.



8. USE IT TO ADD VOLUME TO YOUR HAIR

This Epsom salt hack is surprising and kind of brilliant. If you have fine hair (like yours truly), Epsom salt can visibly thicken the appearance of it. Seriously. Take it from Snyder, who says, "You can also use it to volumize your hair if you mix a pinch in with your hair conditioner!" In other words, Epsom salt can even work as a DIY hair volumizer to back up other volumizing products you use.

9. USE IT BEFORE BED TO ENCOURAGE SLEEP

The final reason you may want to add Epsom salt to your beauty routine is that it encourages sleep. Just like it can help to boost your mood, it also encourages relaxation. Taking a bath helps us unwind all on its own, but adding Epsom salt makes it a mini relaxing wellness retreat. Hamdan says it helps insomnia especially—even if you only use it in a pre-bed foot soak. Bonus points if you add essential oils into the water to encourage relaxation, clarity, or calmness. She likes to "add a few drops of peppermint or tea tree essential oil to it." I like using Dr Teal's Soothe & Sleep Epsom Salts (\$5).

Take this as your cue to push aside your fancy bath salts, bath bombs, and bath oils—at least temporarily—and return to a bath basic: Epsom salt.

<https://thethirty.byrdie.com/epsom-salt-uses--5ad6b53cd2bdb>