



PERSPECTIVE

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## Potential Risk Factors of Habitual Hot Spring Bathing in Japan

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### Description

Warm baths have been suggested to have medicinal benefits for certain diseases, but it is unclear whether heat has a preventive or beneficial effect. To clarify this issue, an epidemiological questionnaire survey was conducted in Japan on individual hot water bathing habits and medical history of daily hot water bathing. A questionnaire on hot spring habits and medical history was randomly sent to 20,000 residents aged 65 and over living in Beppu, Japan, which has the world's largest concentration of hot springs. It has been found to be effective in preventing or promoting the occurrence of certain diseases such as men.

These results demonstrate that habitual body warming is an effective and economical method of producing beneficial preventive and promoting effects on various diseases. Does habitual body heating have any beneficial medical effects in humans? This is a simple question, but the impact of whole-body heating on the human body, including whether habitual body heating is beneficial or harmful, has been investigated. Little is known about. Although warming activities are not common in Western countries, there are many spa resorts in Europe where balneotherapy is covered by national health insurance as a medical treatment. However, the duration of balneotherapy is limited to a few weeks. Therefore, the biological effects of long-term balneotherapy remain unclear. Also, balneotherapy is prescribed only to patients, not to healthy people. In Japan, people have a long history of habitual daily bathing, which involves bathing in lukewarm water rather than showering.

In the land, they prefer ordinary hot spring baths that are rich in minerals. Compared to bathing at home, hot spring baths, which are rich in minerals that promote heat conduction, are effective in raising the core body temperature. Japan's Ministry of the Environment publishes a list of balneotherapy effects of spa bathing for hot bath types 1. According to the list of minerals found in hot springs from 1978 to 2014, hot spring water quality can be classified into 11 types.

This list shows the relationship between each spa type and its target disease. However, the preventive effect of hot spring bathing is not yet known. Kyushu University Beppu Hospital is located in Beppu City, which boasts one of the world's largest amounts of hot spring water. This area has 9 out of 11 spas. Therefore, Beppu City is one of the most suitable areas for conducting epidemiological studies on the disease-preventing effects of habitual hot spring bathing. Therefore, we conducted an epidemiological questionnaire survey on bathing habits and medical history of elderly people in Beppu City.

The strong impact describing positive or negative associations between bathing conditions and various morbidities suggest having appropriate bathing conditions to prevent and avoid much morbidity. We hope that this investigation will be the first step toward popularizing hot spring bathing, which extends healthy life expectancy. Furthermore, we hope that these results can provide a framework for preventive medicine in which other countries can benefit from daily body temperature.