

# Ice bathing: A wellness trend celebrities swear by

Sushmita Jha

Recently a video of Rakul Preet Singh taking a dip in freezing water at an undisclosed location was doing the rounds on social media. However, Rakul's cryotherapy session involving a dip in water at minus 15 degrees celsius is not the first for a celeb. Even Samantha Ruth Prabhu posted a pic of herself submerged in an ice bath, captioning it, "Torture time." But what exactly is the benefit of an ice bath? Experts say that exposing your body to extreme cold temperatures has a plethora of health benefits.



VIDYUT JAMWAL

## REDUCED INFLAMMATION, BETTER RECOVERY: BENEFITS OF ICE BATHS

Experts say cold water immersion reduces inflammation and enhances recovery by changing the way blood and other fluids flow through your body.



SAMANTHA RUTH PRABHU

"Post any physical activity like a sport or workout, your muscles break down, resulting in inflammation. The contraction and expansion of blood vessels during an ice-bath flushes away metabolic waste that accumulates post an intense physical activity. An ice bath helps eliminate soreness and stiffness in your body," says Dr Aalap Jawadekar, a sports physiotherapist. Dr Rahul Rai Kakkar, psychiatrist at a Gurgaon hospital, explains, "Cold baths and exposure to cold temperatures boost our serotonin and reduce cortisol levels. This helps reduce anxiety and stress for a short duration. Always take an expert's advice in whatever you are doing."

**PEOPLE WITH RAYNAUD'S DISEASE OR OTHER CIRCULATORY DISORDERS MAY EXPERIENCE PAIN, NUMBNESS OR OTHER ADVERSE EFFECTS WHEN EXPOSED TO COLD TEMPERATURES. SIMILARLY, ELDERLY PEOPLE OR THOSE WHO HAVE WEAKER IMMUNE SYSTEMS MAY BE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO HYPOTHERMIA**

— Dr Rajesh Kumar Budhiraja, general physician and associate director- internal medicine at a Faridabad hospital



## WHAT'S AN ICE BATH

An ice bath is when you immerse your body in ice-cold water. The practice is said to have multiple health benefits and many celebs and sportspersons swear by it. It's also called the Nordic dip, ice hole bath, cold water immersion etc.



VIRAT KOHLI

## THE RIGHT WAY TO GO ABOUT IT

It is recommended to gradually acclimatise the body to cold water temperatures, starting with shorter and less intense exposures and gradually increasing the intensity. For first timers, it's ideal to start with a cold shower instead of a dip. "Beginners must wear long sleeves and shorts while having an ice bath, to prevent hypothermia. While this may not keep you warm, it will assist you in maintaining a healthy body temperature. Don't stay beyond five minutes in an ice bath especially in the beginning. You can gradually increase your stay-in time, under supervision," says Rahul Malakar, who works on exercise-based therapy for those injured during physical activity.

## FAQS ABOUT ICE BATHS

### Cryotherapy at home

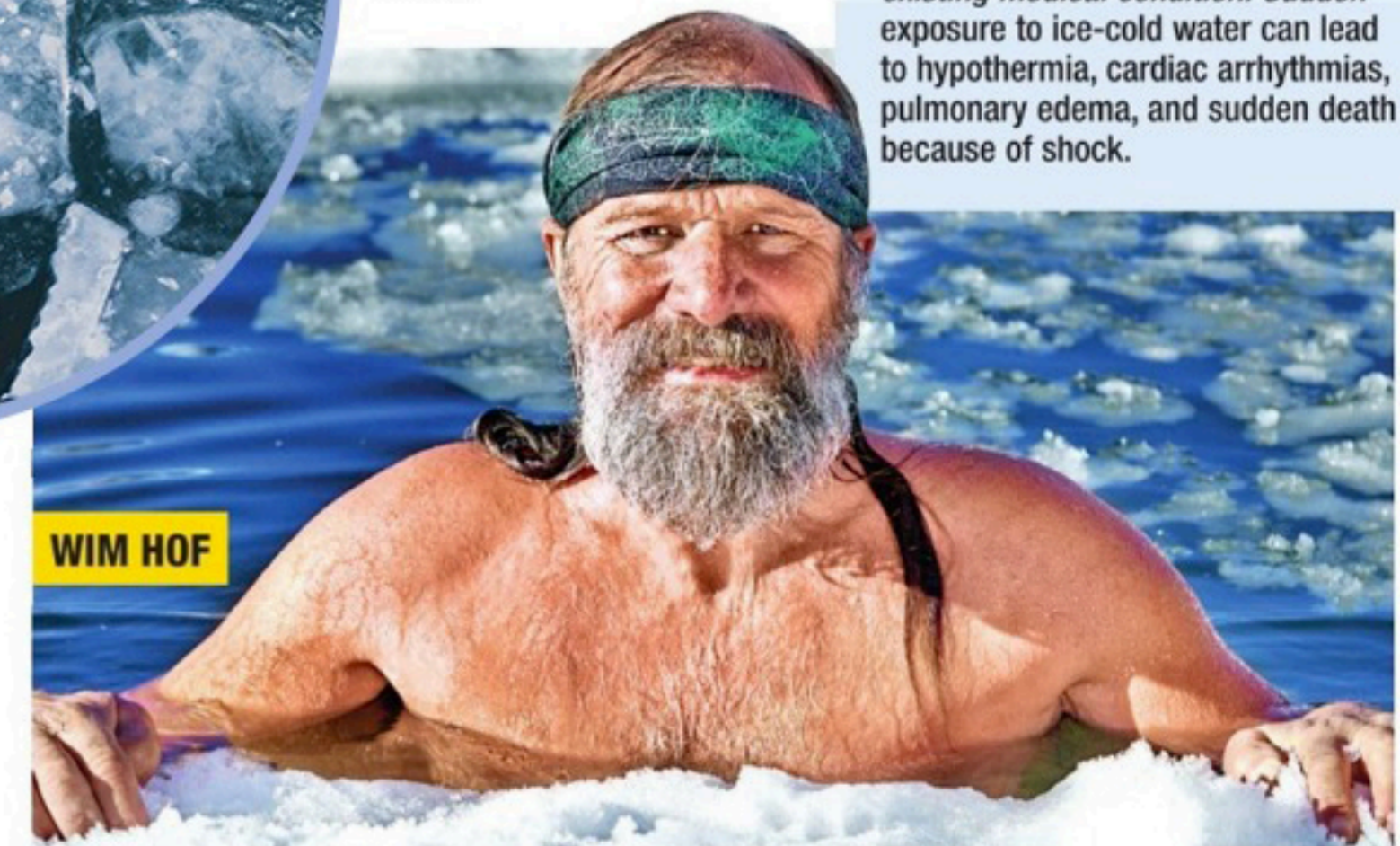
Before attempting an ice-cold bath at home, it is a good idea to consult with a healthcare professional or certified athletic trainer. After consulting, you can take an ice bath in the bathtub or in ice bath units that one can buy for at-home use.

### Difference between cold baths and cryotherapy

An ice bath is a form of cryotherapy. In cryotherapy, extremely cold temperature is generated, generally using dry, cryogenically cooled air, to freeze and destroy abnormal tissue. There's a lot of temperature difference in ice bath and cryotherapy.

### Pay heed to medical conditions before pursuing ice baths

Yes, especially for those who have an existing medical condition. Sudden exposure to ice-cold water can lead to hypothermia, cardiac arrhythmias, pulmonary edema, and sudden death because of shock.



WIM HOF



LADY GAGA

## ICE BATHS AND THEIR SCANDINAVIAN HISTORY

The ice bath practice had been a staple for Scandinavians since the 19th century. Dutch extreme athlete Wim Hof, aka The Iceman, who is known for his ability to withstand extremely low temperatures, is often credited with popularised ice baths. Hof believes that health benefits of an ice bath include an improved cardiovascular system, muscle recovery, improved mental health, pain relief, healing injury, improved sleep and more.