

# Brain Freeze: Celebs Numbly Embrace Cryotherapy, Unfounded Claims & All



By Erik Lief — October 6, 2016



Cryotherapy Believer [1]

When they're not [cooking themselves in the latest incarnations of searing hot boxes](#) [2], a legion of celebrities are dunking themselves in cylinders of super-chilled air -- all in the name of stress and pain relief. Or so they'd like to believe.

Hot. Cold. Cook. Freeze. Pick an extreme, and someone will embrace the craziness, spending a bundle in the process. Lost on these adopters is the fact that whatever these so-called feel-good machines claim to do, none of it is true. And despite health warnings from experts, and the lack of evidence from the scientific community, the true believers still line up for more.

Only weeks ago we wrote about the [rise of infrared saunas](#) [3], which promised to "detoxify," "rejuvenate" and "cleanse" those who strode through its doors and sat for awhile. No surprise the fad caught on in Hollywood, where it marinated, percolated and then picked up steam, spreading to followers near and far. Now, on the other end of the spectrum, we have cryotherapy and its insanely cold temperatures that its purveyors say can do just about everything and anything -- that is, if you're gullible enough to believe them. And if it doesn't kill you, [like](#) [4] [it did last year](#) [4] to a 24-year-old Nevada woman.

Where cryotherapy took root in the United States is hard to say, but besides the California celebrity set it's frighteningly on the way to becoming a nationwide craze. Look at range of places where it's popping up.

"NYCCryo in New York promises that cryotherapy leads to "quicker surgical recovery time.' Thrive CryoStudio in Rockville, Md., claims it 'alleviates symptoms from joint disorders, rheumatoid diseases, fibromyalgia, psoriasis and migraines,'" according to the [Washington Post](#) [5], which

adds, "Atlanta's Cryo EliteTherapy said it 'has been proven to improve peak levels of performance.' Omaha's Ice Out CryoSpa boasts 'alleviation of depression, anxiety, fatigue, insomnia.' CryoSF in San Francisco says the treatment 'helps increase testosterone in men' and "reduce signs of aging, increases collagen production, improve skin condition and reduce cellulite."

Unfortunately for all the patrons of these spas, none of these claims are verifiable. The Food and Drug Administration agrees.

"The problem is, this so-called 'treatment' hasn't been proven to do any of these things," the FDA states on its website, [in a post titled](#) <sup>[6]</sup> "Whole Body Cryotherapy (WBC): A "Cool" Trend that Lacks Evidence, Poses Risks," and published in July. "Based on purported health benefits seen in many promotions for cryotherapy spas, consumers may incorrectly believe that the FDA has cleared or approved WBC devices as safe and effective to treat medical conditions,' says Aron Yustein, M.D., a medical officer in the FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health. 'That is not the case.' In fact, not a single WBC device has been cleared or approved by the agency in support of these claims."

So what is cryotherapy, and what do its users claim it produces? Spa customers walk into a full-body chamber, which is filled with super-chilled air at temperatures dropping as low as 275 *degrees below zero* Fahrenheit. This frigid folly lasts just three to five minutes, depending on the person and temperature selected.

As for its benefits, "Advocates like to say that the cold air forces blood to your core, tricking the body into thinking it's experiencing hypothermia," the Post reported. "From there, the claims get a bit fuzzy. Whole body cryotherapy believers say it acts as a super-charged ice bath, allowing muscles and tendons to more quickly recover from heavy training or pain, reducing inflammation. And many just claim, in the most unscientific of terms, that they feel *energized* by the treatment."

In addition to athletes who feel it delivers as promised, the bold-name believers from the entertainment world include Daniel Craig, Tony Robbins and truth-stretcher Jessica Alba ([of The Honest Company fame; see our take of her work here](#) <sup>[7]</sup>). And talk about running both hot *and* cold, not only is actress Jennifer Aniston an infrared sauna sitter but she's also cryo-chamber client.

So if it's not clear by now, best practice is to stay away from these insta-people-popsicle machines, and leave the freeze-dried business to instant coffee makers.

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[4] <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/27/health/cryotherapy-death-health-trend/>

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[6] <http://www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm508739.htm>

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