

Halotherapy: Is Salt Treatment For Real?

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When it comes to salt, we at Healthland tend to focus on its dietary advantages and disadvantages. But it turns out that there's a burgeoning new trend in salt consumption: some people are breathing in the mineral, instead of eating it, in order to treat respiratory ailments like asthma and allergies. So-called halotherapy centers are popping up increasingly in the U.S., Europe and Canada. Do they work? (**More on Time.com:** [5 Ways to Beat the Winter Doldrums](#)).

Salt therapy consists of sitting in a room coated with salt crystals and pumped full of salt-laden air. The experience is designed to approximate that in the naturally occurring salt caves in Eastern Europe (except with comfy lounge chairs and flat-screen TVs), which are said to improve symptoms of allergy, asthma and skin conditions.

"The whole microclimate with the right air quality, humidity and salt particles is effective for cleansing the respiratory tract, the skin and the body as a whole," Ron Rofé, owner of Halo Air/Salt Rooms in New York City, [told Reuters](#). (**More on Time.com:** [The 'Other' Salt: 5 Foods Rich in Potassium](#))

If it sounds more like trend than science, that's because it is; there have been no clinical studies of salt therapy in the U.S. Still, some past research suggests there may be something to it. A 2006 [study](#) [PDF] in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that inhaling hypertonic saline improved lung function in people with cystic fibrosis. Also in 2006, a [study](#) [PDF] of cigarette smokers, published in the *European Respiratory Journal*, found that inhaling aerosolized salt temporarily improved smoking-related symptoms such as coughing and mucus production.

But owners of salt-therapy rooms are careful to note that their facilities are geared toward improving clients' wellness and are not medical establishments. And they're aware that medical doctors consider salt therapy a folk remedy. In a recent [article](#), Anastasia Economides of the *Star-Ledger* in New Jersey reported:

Respira owner Etya Novik said she understands the skepticism toward salt therapy, and stresses to clients that it should serve as a complementary approach to traditional medicine. The typical 45-minute session costs \$60 and Respira has attracted about 300 clients since the center opened in May. ()

“If you think about chiropractic, acupuncture, even the neti pot, they were all considered out there one time but were slowly accepted in the medical world,” said Novik, who previously worked for Microsoft and has no medical background. “I think that a lot of American doctors just aren’t familiar with salt therapy.”