

# Shaking off allergies: New salt spa in Bearden offers relief, clients and owner say

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By Rebecca Simmons

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Where: 6210 Highland Place Way

Cost: \$45 for one salt therapy session. Packages and memberships available.

Info: [www.traditionalhealthclinic.com](http://www.traditionalhealthclinic.com) or 865-588-1755

Kathy Paradis suffers from tracheal stenosis, a rare condition where scar tissue develops inside the trachea and causes it to narrow to about the size of a straw. Allergies affect her condition and make it even more difficult for her to breathe.

For the last five years, Paradis has felt the effects of the allergies for which Knoxville is routinely ranked as a top locale. The most recent announcement by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, in September, named Knoxville as the #1 Fall Allergy Capital in the country.

This season, Paradis is getting some relief at the newly opened Salt Spa at the Traditional Health Clinic in Bearden ? the area's first salt room.

Will Foster, owner of The Traditional Health Clinic, licensed acupuncturist and doctor of oriental medicine, is the person responsible for opening Knoxville's new Salt Spa.

According to his explanation of how salt therapy works, machines called halogenerators mill the salt into extremely fine particles that are blown into the salt room. When patients breathe the air, the micronized salt particles travel deep into the farthest reaches of the lungs and sinuses.

This reduces inflammation in the airways, thereby reducing constriction in the sinuses, bronchi and bronchioles and promoting elimination of allergens and pollutants, according to Foster.

"It's an elegantly simple method," said Foster. "Salt is part of all the old medical systems, from India, from China. It's been around for ages."

Salt therapy came about in the 1850s when Eastern European doctors observed that salt miners had very low incidences of tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases. Seeking relief, those suffering from these diseases began to visit and even sleep overnight in the mines.

From that came this modern approach of salt therapy that simulates the effects of the salt mines.

At the Traditional Health Clinic, the Salt Spa is a peaceful place where the floor and walls are covered in salt, and patients relax in reclining chairs, with blankets, natural light and soft music. The therapy happens in 45-minute sessions. Hairnets and shoe covers are worn to preserve the cleanliness of the salt.

Paradis was one of the first people to visit the Salt Spa when it opened in August.

"I love living in Knoxville, but with my condition, I had seriously considered, do I have to move in order to breathe?" said Paradis. "And to find out about this [The Salt Spa], that we have this here, it is amazing. I think it's a perfect place given our allergy situation here."

Paradis had just returned from Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital where she had a temporary surgery to stretch her trachea. Doctors there wanted her to have a permanent resection of the trachea, an intensive surgery, because the temporary stretching is only supposed to last two months.

It has been more than two months and Paradis is trying to avoid that surgery by visiting the Salt Spa five days a week.

"I'm trying to put off that surgery as long as possible," said Paradis. "And who knows ? maybe I won't need it. But for me (salt therapy) has been life changing."

The effects of salt therapy can be beneficial to everyone, from those with severe ailments like Paradis to those suffering from more common seasonal issues.

Visiting the Salt Spa was a turning point for Kristen Yartz after a 10-day course of antibiotics couldn't kick a lingering sinus infection and deep chest cough.

"I achieved a deep sense of relaxation that I hadn't experienced in years," said Yartz. "I could have happily remained there for many hours. When I left the room, my lips were salty and I coughed a bit, which I was told was to be expected. The subsequent days after my session, my cough rapidly began to clear and I started to feel better."

Yartz has two young children and appreciates the fact that a second salt room at the Traditional Health Clinic is just for children and families. Books and toys to play with entertain children while they sit in the coarse, large salt that covers the bottom three inches of the floor like a giant sandbox.

"If either of my children developed a cough or sinus issues or a particularly nasty cold, we'd be booking a session or two," said Yartz.

Foster says the benefits for children are the same as adults.

"It's really helpful for many of the conditions that are plaguing many Knoxvilleans," says Foster about the Salt Spa. "It's very good for asthma, allergies, respiratory issues, relaxation, and for kids too."