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There is plenty of evidence that exposure to cold is beneficial to our overall health. Recent scientific studies have shown that sustained and regular exposure to cold increases metabolic rate and calorie expenditure; reduces systemic inflammation; strengthens the nervous and immune systems; heals injuries and speeds recovery; regulates blood sugar levels by increasing levels of adiponectin – a protein involved in blood glucose regulation; improves sleep quality; and increases lifespan due to hormesis – a natural adaptation that our bodies go through when exposed to environmental stresses.

My interest in cold-water bathing, or any exposure to extreme temperatures (high



or low) and environments relates more to our internal hard-wiring than to finding another ‘cure’. We are not built for constant comfort and homeostasis. Our dependence on modern conveniences and preference for sanitised and temperature-controlled environments has weakened our immune systems and destabilised our internal self-balancing and regulating

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systems. So one sure benefit of cold-water bathing or any type of cold exposure is the most obvious: discomfort. Any exposure to discomfort strengthens our body’s defence mechanisms and builds up our physical and mental resilience. And it is our own built-in resilience – not any one treatment or therapy – that will keep us healthy and well.

That said, spas are havens of comfort, so I’m sceptical that hotel spas have the risk-tolerance, interest or resources to bring effective cold-water therapies beyond the requisite cold plunge, decorative ice-fountains, or

the trendy snow/ice room that is often nothing more than a glorified and expensive chilled room – all of which often become under-utilised once their novelty wears off.

Often, the most effective cold therapies are best experienced in nature, or in the privacy of your own home – without expensive or high-tech equipment. A brisk walk in the early morning when temperature is at its lowest, a cold shower, or lowering the thermostat at night before going to bed – these have more lasting benefits to your overall wellbeing than an over-priced tepid-water therapy in a spa.