

on your feet:

# Healing hypnosis

Hypnosis can provide a useful form of stress release for both anxious patients and stressed dental team members, writes **Arveen Bajaj**.

**F**ear of visiting the dentist has been cited as one of the reasons that people avoid getting dental treatment. For some, the anxiety and stress they feel at an impending dental appointment is too much to bear.

In such situations, hypnosis can offer a solution. According to the British Society of Medical and Dental Hypnosis (BSMDH) it has been used successfully in the dental profession for many years. It has numerous applications; prior to, and during treatment, and post-operatively. The organisation asserts that hypnosis is extremely useful for reducing anxiety and fears and can prove to be invaluable as the more a patient can feel relaxed, the less uncomfortable or painful their dental experience will be, allowing the treatment to be more straightforward and easier for all concerned.

Graham Temple, Honorary Secretary of the BSMDH, and Chair of its Yorkshire branch, believes that the most basic effect of hypnosis is increased relaxation.

He explains, 'It is not some mystical power transmitted from the operator to the subject. In fact, contrary to popular opinion, a patient is never under the 'control' of the operator, indeed, quite the opposite. The aim is to help the patient gain more control, over their thoughts, their feelings, and consequently their actions. It seeks to alter the patients perception, thus enabling them to cope more



successfully, and to be more in control.'

Far from being a 'new age' practice, the use of hypnosis can be traced back to primitive cultures. The ancient Egyptians had their Temples of Sleep, and the Greeks their Shrines of Healing, where patients were given curative suggestion whilst in an induced sleep.

Graham adds that for children, particularly, hypnosis can be very effective. 'In general, children are very receptive, especially to stories, and will easily go into trance, allowing treatment to be carried out and that hypnotic suggestion can be used to increase compliance with oral hygiene instruction, and to remove habits such as thumb sucking,' he says.

There are also advantages to members of the dental team, according to hypnotherapists

Anthony Asquith and Andrew Cain who run workshops on the subject. They use four rapid hypnotic inductions to introduce calmness in dental patients, and can help the dental professional better understand trance states such as anxiety, how patients communicate their messages at an unconscious level and how to read these signals. The dental professional can also consider their own emotional state management with several approaches to aiding calmness when working with anxious patients and also explore quick recovery after stressful situations.

For further information contact The National Office, BSMDH. Tel: 07000 560 309 [www.bsmdh.org](http://www.bsmdh.org) and Fear Free Dentistry, Tel: 01273 732690, or visit [www.fearfreedentistry.co.uk](http://www.fearfreedentistry.co.uk)



on your feet

# In the Swim

Swimming is one of the best forms of exercise around, and particularly appealing in summer. **Kate Maynard** takes a dip.

**F**or those of you with a late seaside holiday planned this year, how do you intend to spend your days on the beach? Floating leisurely about on a lilo, or paddling in the shallows while topping up your tan? Here's a thought, why not go for a swim? Swimming in seawater has all the usual benefits this unique form of exercise has to your health and wellbeing while also being easier to stay afloat in due to the high salt content. Just make sure you swim in a designated zone within sight of the shoreline - and always reserve energy for the return swim. Not only will you return home relaxed, happy, and no

doubt well fed and watered - you'll feel healthy too.

Whether in the sea or at your local pool, indoor or outdoor (tidal seaside pools and lidos still exist across Britain), swimming is acknowledged as one of the safest forms of exercise, second only perhaps to walking. The resistance of the water ensures that you burn calories, but impact on your joints is significantly lower than other forms of exercise like running and attending the gym. It can be particularly beneficial for pregnant women - to ease the weight of that bump - and for people with injuries. Not least is the ubiquitous 'feel good factor' that people of all ages and

backgrounds can gain by hitting the wet stuff.

Of course, being able to swim is also an essential life skill. It's a good idea to take your children swimming early so that they don't develop a fear of water; babies are natural swimmers - they even automatically hold their breath underwater for the first few months of their life. A lot of leisure centres have parent and baby sessions, although some require the child to be at least six months old. Lessons for all ages and women-only sessions are also available nationwide, which should help if you're not overly confident in the water or have never had the opportunity to learn to swim. What is certain is that swimming is an ideal pursuit for the whole family.

Once you've donned your swimsuit and goggles and are ready to take the plunge, don't be put off by fanatics going for the



world record in the fast lane. Just swim at your own pace and if you go regularly - at least once a week - you'll soon increase your stamina and see the positive effects. Try varying your stroke - breaststroke, freestyle or back crawl, and butterfly for the more adventurous - for a great all-over workout. Even going slowly will tone your muscles and burn fat.

If you're feeling particularly brave you could take a dip in one of the UK's rivers or lakes (as an example, Lake Windermere in the Lake District reaches a rather bracing temperature of 12°C in summer; and don't even think about it in winter!) Swimming is forbidden in reservoirs, but lakes vary; just ensure you look out for signs and warnings and never dive in if you don't know the depth of the water or what is lurking beneath the surface. The same goes for rivers, where there is the added risk of tides and currents. Avoid private waters, including those

used for fishing, and don't swim near to boats or other watercraft. Despite the limitations, swimming in UK inland waters has an enthusiastic following that goes back centuries. More information can be found at [www.riverswimming.co.uk](http://www.riverswimming.co.uk)

So what are you waiting for? Whether it's an invigorating splash in the shallow end or 50 lengths at lunchtime, giving the fish a run for their money on holiday or crossing the Channel the cheap way - swimming is for everyone!

#### Useful websites

[www.britishswimming.org](http://www.britishswimming.org)  
[www.scottishswimming.org](http://www.scottishswimming.org)  
[www.welshasa.co.uk](http://www.welshasa.co.uk)  
[www.riverswimming.co.uk](http://www.riverswimming.co.uk)  
[www.lidos.org.uk](http://www.lidos.org.uk)