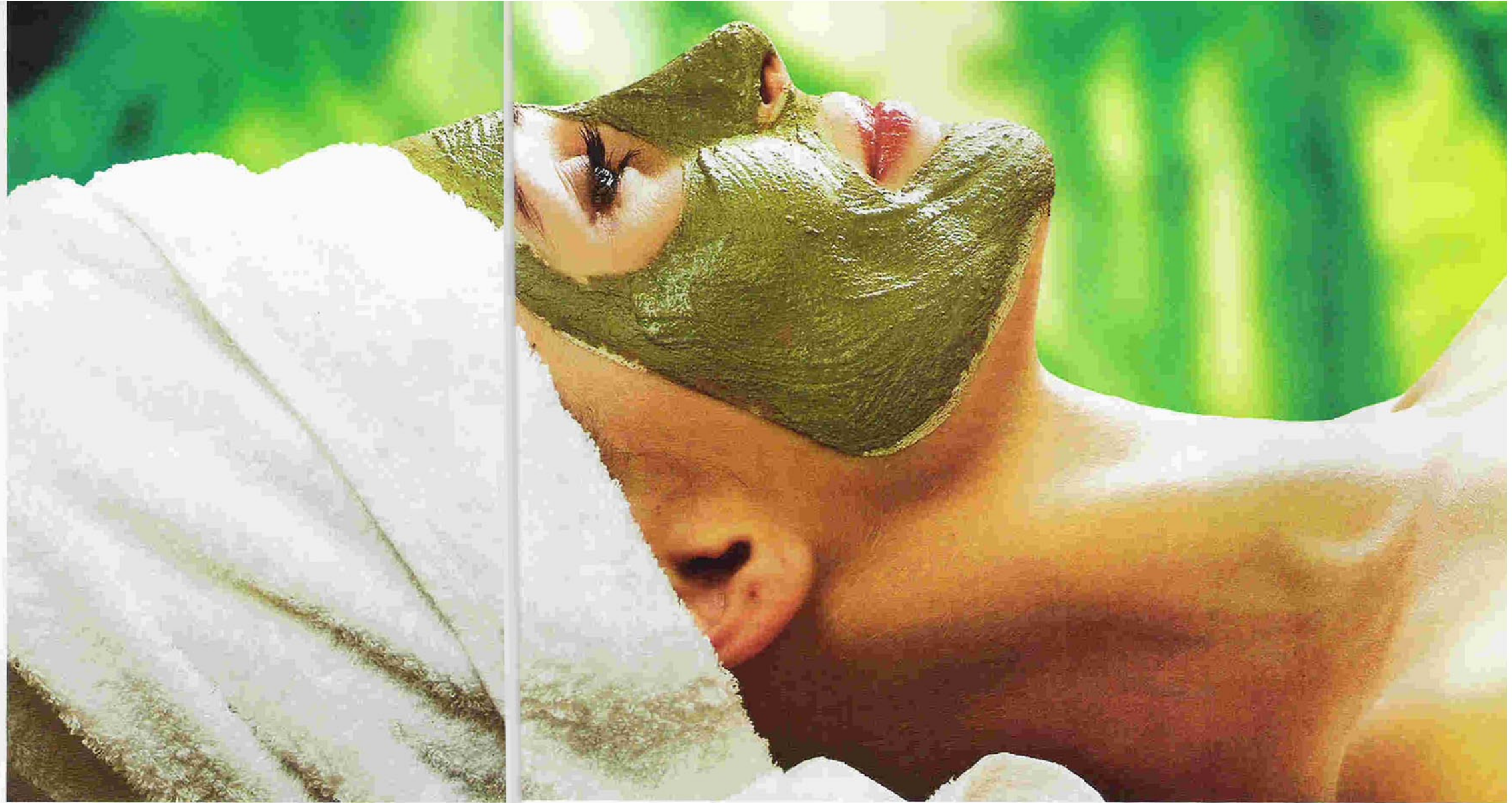


wellness

BACK TO BASICS

Mud therapy is increasingly getting popular among masses as it is natural, eco-friendly and reasonable on one's pocket

words Khurshheed Dinshaw



BENEFITS

It relaxes muscles and improves blood circulation

It maintains metabolism, rendering positive impact on digestion

It is useful in conditions of inflammation/ swelling and relieves pain

It is a good hair conditioner and is good for skin

It is useful in condition of stiff joints

Why mud therapy?

Out of the five constituent elements of this universe, mud (earth) has a pivotal role to play in our well being. The dark colour of mud helps in absorbing different colours and conveying them to the body, giving it therapeutic properties. Also, its shape and consistency may be modified with ease, just by changing the water content which makes it easy to use. A mud pack is advantageous over a cold compress (cold water therapy) as it retains the coolness over a longer period of time. Therefore, it is recommended whenever a prolonged cold application is required. Lastly, it is easily available and a cost effective treatment option.

Mud therapy conventionally uses mud that consists of clay, minerals, water and organic substances in various percentages

Depending on the source of the mud, the mineral content varies.

Mud found in different parts of the world has different properties. Its composition varies with the place of origin. First, mineral constituents of mud varies with the kind of rocks found in the region and the process of soil formation. Second, mud property is influenced by kind of flora and fauna of the region. Therefore, it is essential to learn about properties of mud before utilising it benefits.

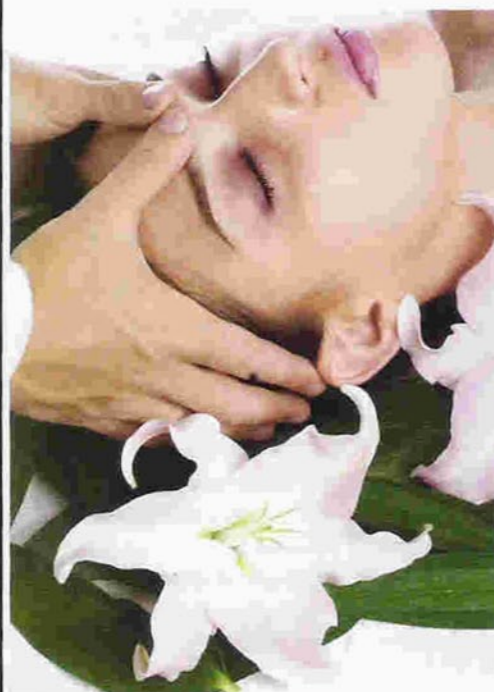
Mud is mixed with other ingredients only if the required effect is different and disease-specific, else it is used in natural form. Most often, water is added to turn it into a paste for easy application. "Mud is used for its therapeutic properties in natural form in naturopathy. When mixed with water, its original properties remain intact unlike

when mixed with other ingredients," explains Dr Sharma on why naturopaths avoid mixing mud with any other medium except water.

Local mud therapy is rendered in the form of direct application or as a pack to a specific part of the body. "The minimum duration of a pack is 20 minutes while the maximum is case-specific as well as the time it takes for the pack to dry," explains naturopath Sumathi from Pune-based National Institute of Naturopathy. The pack size depends on the width and circumference of the affected area. To make the pack, mud is first mixed with water, then a thin cotton cloth is taken and the paste put on it. This cloth is then placed on the affected area. After the mud is dry, the area is wiped with cold water.

Another form of mud therapy application is a mud bath that is given in a special cubicle where the patient is exposed to sunlight. Mud may be applied in a sitting or lying down position. "This helps improve the skin condition by increasing circulation and energising skin tissues. Care should be taken that the patient doesn't catch a cold during the bath. Afterwards, he/she must be thoroughly washed with a cold water jet spray. If the patient feels a chill, warm water should be used. He/ she should then be dried up quickly and transferred to a warm bed," explains Dr Sharma. The duration of such a bath ranges from 45 to 60 minutes.

A mud facial is a good way to benefit from natural properties of mud, especially if one has oily or normal skin. For this, soaked mud paste needs to be applied on the face and allowed to dry for 30 minutes. "This helps improve the skin's complexion as well as removes pimples and open skin pores. These, in turn, facilitate elimination. It also clears off dark circles under the eyes," adds Dr Sharma. The face should be washed thoroughly with



cold water after 30 minutes. Mud therapists advise people having skin lesions should refrain from mud therapy. "Those opting for abdomen application and mud bath should do so on an empty stomach," adds Dr Sumathi while Dr Sharma opines there needs to be a three-hour gap before meals and mud therapy application. However, meals can be taken after a gap of one hour after treatment.

Once mud therapy is completed, the skin becomes dry. This is a natural phenomenon and the person should wait for an hour before applying any moisturiser if he/she is going out since this is just the reaction phase. Ideally, the skin should be left as it is without application of any moisturiser so that its normal secretions start working.

Not just naturopaths, spa therapists also use mud in various treatments. At The Four Fountains Spa (TFFS), India's first chain of health spas, Bastar Mitti body wrap is quite popular. It is a 60-minute therapy that begins with a 30-minute jasmine body polish. This is followed by the application of a mask

made of natural mud from Bastar. "The wrap improves skin texture by removing excess fluid and toxins as well as treats unsightly appearance of cellulite and gives a boost to lymphatic system and metabolism," explains TFFS director Sunil Rao.

Mud therapy helps remove dead skin and stress, refines skin texture and relieves internal congestion. Apart from this, it improves blood circulation which helps clear internal toxins, improves skin appearance by activating blood circulation and acts as a natural moisturiser. It also reduces skin hypersensitivity and draws out the impurities that contribute to inflammation.

Despite the therapeutic properties of mud which are useful in maintaining good health and glowing skin, over-use of application may lead to drying of the skin. Therefore, it is necessary to keep the pack moistened to avoid excessive dryness and stretching. The mud must be carefully chosen for obtaining desired results, and its quality must be ensured to avoid complications. ■