

# Halotherapy as a Complementary Treatment for Asthma

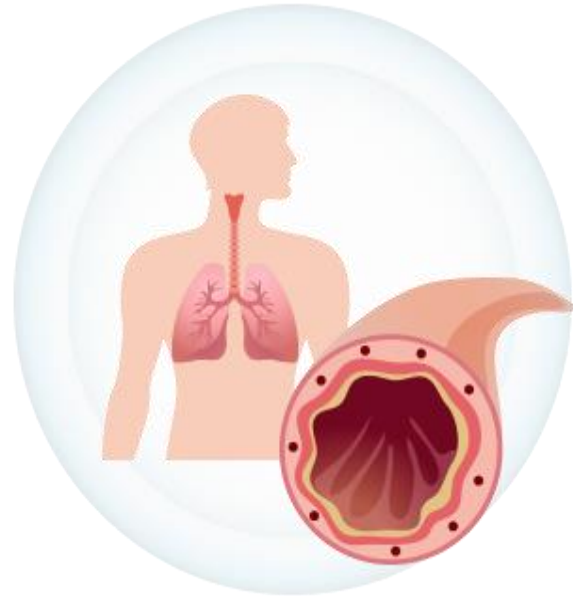
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## INTRODUCTION

There are over 15-20 million with asthma in India. Although the respiratory system is good, when you come into contact with something that irritates your lungs, your airways (bronchi) narrow, the muscles around them tighten and there is an increase in the production of sticky mucus (phlegm), which makes you difficult to breathe.

For those suffering from asthma, Salt Therapy can not only bring much-needed relief, and also prevent the frequent recurrence of the symptoms. If it is left untreated, the inflammation become chronic and can lead to the lungs becoming irreversibly obstructed. Prescription drugs and inhalers may bring immediate relief, but Salt Therapy has a far more lasting effect. Prescription of drugs such as inhalers can only bring the short-term fix, leaving the underlying problem unchanged once an attack has passed. Salt therapy is unique because:



Salt Therapy reduces the inflammation and widens the airways



Salt kills bacteria



Salt is mucolytic, which means it helps to shift retained mucus and therefore it reduces the chance of infection



Salt Therapy reduces IgE levels, which means the immune system won't over-react to asthma or allergy triggers

#### BOOK A SESSION

##### Symptoms of Asthma

- Wheezing
- Cough
- Shortness of Breath
- Common Cold
- chest pain
- night cough
- difficulty breathing
- tachycardia

##### What is salt therapy?

“Salt rooms” are popping up in the U.S., Australia, the U.K. and elsewhere. These rooms charge you a fee to enter, like a spa. Salt crystals coat the rooms and the air is salt-laden as an attempt to mimic naturally occurring salt caves.

The history of natural salt caves as an asthma remedy is ancient. In Russia and Eastern Europe, people with asthma would descend into salt caves. The belief is that breathing in extremely small salt crystals would help open up the airways and assist with the buildup of mucus.

##### What does science tell us about salt therapy?

Studies evaluating salt therapy for asthma are few.

One of the largest studies to examine the use of salt caves evaluated the therapy for COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). COPD is a chronic disease of the lungs caused by smoking.

Researchers reviewed 151 articles about salt therapy. They checked for high-quality studies (randomized controlled trials), like those conducted for prescription medications.

Of the 151 studies, they found just one randomized controlled trial. Researchers reviewed three other studies to include more people. Many people in the studies reported feeling better after undergoing salt therapy. But researchers identified several quality concerns about these four studies.

As a result, researchers were unable to draw any conclusions. Some of the missing or incomplete information included:

- Whether the subjects had COPD or asthma
- What medications the patients took
- How severe their breathing difficulties were at the start of the study
- The long-term effect of the treatment (for example, people were examined only right after treatment)

In some countries, medical societies have warned that salt caves can have negative effects. For example, the salt cave could induce bronchoconstriction in some people.

Another danger is that if you have asthma, you may stop taking your regular medicine. Halotherapy is expensive. Many patients may struggle to afford both prescription medicines and salt therapy. But long-term control medications are needed to help prevent and control asthma symptoms. Take them as your healthcare provider tells you to, even if you feel well.

##### Is halotherapy safe?

"If your goal is to find a new way to de-stress, salt caves can do the trick. They're cool, quiet and relaxing," said Maureen George, PhD, RN, AE-C,

FAAN, a member of AAFA's Medical Scientific Council, and an Associate Professor of Nursing at the Columbia University School of Nursing. "If you're looking for a natural way to treat your asthma, halotherapy is not what you're looking for. It has not been rigorously studied, despite claims from 'experts'."

Patients should also know that inhaling concentrated salts (hypertonic saline) has been proven to irritate the airways, causing cough and mucus, which can make asthma worse for some people.

The bottom line:

Halotherapy, or sitting in a salt room, is not likely to make your asthma better. For most asthma patients, halotherapy is "likely safe." Since you don't know how you will react, AAFA warns that it is best to err on the side of caution and avoid salt rooms.

Key definitions:

Randomized controlled trials: Participants are randomly placed into two groups. One group does not receive any treatment. The other group receives the treatment under consideration. Researchers follow both groups over time. At the end of the study, they compare results.

Efficacy: Whether or not a treatment works, and by how much.

Halotherapy methods

Halotherapy is usually broken down into dry and wet methods, depending on how the salt is administered.

Dry methods

The dry method of halotherapy is usually done in a man-made "salt cave" that's free of humidity. The temperature is cool, set to 68°F (20°C) or lower. Sessions usually last for about 30 to 45 minutes.

A device called a halogenerator grinds salt into microscopic particles and releases them into the air of the room. Once inhaled, these salt particles are

claimed to absorb irritants, including allergens and toxins, from the respiratory system. Advocates say this process breaks up mucus and reduces inflammation, resulting in clear airways.

The salt particles are said to have a similar effect on your skin by absorbing bacteria and other impurities responsible for many skin conditions.

Salt is also said to produce negative ions. This theoretically causes your body to release more serotonin, one of the chemicals behind feelings of happiness. Many people use Himalayan salt lamps to get the benefits of negative ions at home. However, there's no evidence that these lamps have any benefit other than adding ambience.

Wet methods

Halotherapy is also done using a mixture of salt and water. Wet methods of halotherapy include:

- gargling salt water
- drinking salt water
- bathing in salt water
- using salt water for nasal irrigation
- flotation tanks filled with salt water

Key Points about Salt Mines Used for Halotherapy:

1. **Natural Salt Mines:** These are large underground caverns where salt has been deposited over millions of years. Famous salt mines used for halotherapy include the Wieliczka Salt Mine in Poland and the Salina Turda in Romania.
2. **Halotherapy Rooms:** In some salt mines, specific rooms have been adapted or built to create controlled environments where salt particles are dispersed into the air. Visitors spend time in these rooms to inhale the salt-laden air.
3. **Health Benefits:** Proponents of halotherapy suggest that it can help with conditions like asthma, bronchitis, allergies, and certain skin conditions like eczema and psoriasis. The salt particles are thought to have anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties.
4. **Therapeutic Environment:** The environment in salt mines is naturally low in allergens and pollutants, which, combined with the benefits of

salt, is believed to provide a therapeutic atmosphere for those with respiratory or skin conditions.

#### Notable Salt Mines Used for Halotherapy:

- Wieliczka Salt Mine, Poland: A UNESCO World Heritage site, it has been used for halotherapy since the 19th century.
- Salina Turda, Romania: An ancient salt mine converted into a modern therapeutic and tourist attraction.
- Bochnia Salt Mine, Poland: Another historical mine known for its therapeutic properties.

#### Notable Locations in India Offering Halotherapy:

- Arogya Salt Cave Spa, Delhi

One of the first salt therapy centers in India, Arogya Salt Cave Spa in Delhi offers a unique experience where visitors can relax in a room lined with Himalayan salt blocks. The air is infused with salt particles, believed to help with respiratory and skin conditions.

- Salt Room Therapy, Mumbai

Located in the bustling city of Mumbai, this center offers halotherapy sessions in a specially designed salt room. It caters to people with respiratory issues like asthma, sinusitis, and allergies, as well as those looking for general wellness benefits.

- Salt World, Bangalore

Salt World in Bangalore provides halotherapy in a modern setting with rooms constructed using Himalayan salt. It offers therapeutic sessions that claim to improve respiratory health, skin conditions, and overall wellness.

- Purnayu Salt Cave, Pune

This center offers salt cave therapy in a room made with pure Himalayan pink salt. Purnayu Salt Cave

focuses on providing relief from respiratory problems, stress, and fatigue through halotherapy sessions.

## CONCLUSION

Halotherapy may offer a supplementary treatment option for individuals with asthma, particularly those seeking non-pharmacological approaches. However, further research with well-designed clinical trials is necessary to establish its efficacy and safety. Patients should consult their healthcare providers before incorporating halotherapy into their asthma management plan

### Risks of Halotherapy

Halotherapy can have some side effects. You may have coughing and more mucus secretion because your nasal passages are clearing out. Rarely, you may notice skin irritation or conjunctivitis, or pink eye.

Avoid halotherapy if you have:

- Hyperthyroidism
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Tuberculosis
- Heart problems
- Respiratory failure
- Blood disorders like anemia, hemophilia, or clotting
- Infectious diseases
- Fever

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