

DETAILS

health & fitness

CRYOTHERAPY: WHY ICE-COLD IS THE KEY TO A HOT BODY

GO SUBZERO AND YOU'LL GET IN YOUR BEST SHAPE EVER. THAT'S THE PROMISE OF THE LATEST IN-DEMAND EXERCISE AND RECOVERY TREATMENT FOR ELITE ATHLETES AND FITNESS-MINDED CELEBS. ARE YOU READY TO HAVE YOUR ASSETS FROZEN?

BY JOSEPH HOOPER, PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUSTIN FANTL

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In the iconic spy thrillers written by Ian Fleming in the 1950s and '60s, James Bond wouldn't think of taking on an archvillain without first dragging his hungover secret-agent self into a morning shower that always ended with an icy blast. He wasn't the first man of action who kept his mojo rising with a cold shot: The Spartans bathed only in frigid water, believing warm water would weaken warriors; for centuries, Finns have sworn by the tradition of ice-hole swimming; and in the 1840s, European royalty flocked to a German named Vincenz Priessnitz, who used cold-water therapy to treat everything from dislocated bones to syphilis to cholera.

Fast-forward to the present day, and 007 is bringing back the Cold War: Daniel Craig reportedly whipped himself into fighting shape for the latest Bond installment, *Skyfall*, with cryotherapy—in which the participant, enclosed

in a special chamber, is subjected to temperatures down to -260°F and below. It typically works this way: With your head outside the chamber, while wearing workout shorts plus mittens and dry socks, you're flash-frozen for about three minutes, after which you warm back up with a 10-minute moderate-intensity cardio session on a treadmill or an elliptical trainer. Proponents say the cold shock to the system stimulates anti-inflammatory proteins (and blocks the pro-inflammatory type) that reduce soreness and muscle damage, allowing you to recover faster and work out harder and longer. Call it the steroid effect—via a Sub-Zero.

Since its introduction in Europe in the 1980s, whole-body cryo has become practically de rigueur in elite training circles there. But it has reached top-tier athletes in the United States only in the past two years: Kobe Bryant is a fan, as is Olympic sprinter Justin Gatlin. The Dallas Mavericks used cryotherapy units during their 2011 NBA championship run (Jason Kidd called cryo their secret weapon). It should come as no surprise that Hollywood is getting a deep freeze too: Jonas Kuehne, a German-born doctor, opened CryoHealthcare Inc., in West Hollywood, which caters to young stars going through intensive physical training. "If actors have to get in shape quickly," Kuehne says, "they're doing intense workout regimens, and cryotherapy really decreases recovery time." And Jason Walsh, an L.A.-based celebrity trainer, used cryo to help actor Milo Ventimiglia recover from the two-a-day weight-lifting sessions that got him ripped for his role as a U.S. Marine in *That's My Boy*.

Now the treatment is popping up at cutting-edge fitness facilities, health spas, and stand-alone centers across the country, where clients pay around \$80 a session to freeze their assets.



THE BIG CHILL: In the new fitness order, first you cool way down (think -260°F), then you warm up with cardio.