

Pelotherapy at Home

Building a mud and clay practice — the ancient wisdom behind it, and how to bring it home

Long before clay masks were a skincare aisle staple, mineral-rich earth was medicine — applied to wounds, joints, and skin across civilizations with no contact with one another. Here's where that practice comes from, and how to bring a version of it into your own bathroom.

01

MESOPOTAMIA AND EGYPT: THE OLDEST MEDICINE EARTHS

Some of the earliest documented uses of mud as medicine come from Mesopotamia around 2500 BCE, where clays and earths were applied to wounds and skin conditions. Centuries later, Nile and Dead Sea mud were worked into wraps and packs across Egypt, popularized in legend by Cleopatra, who reportedly used Dead Sea mud to care for her skin.

GETTING STARTED

Dead Sea mud remains one of the most mineral-dense options available today, rich in magnesium, potassium, and calcium from the sea's uniquely concentrated salts.

02

AYURVEDA'S FIVE MUDS

The Harita Samhita, an Ayurvedic text composed around the 6th or 7th century CE, describes five distinct types of therapeutic mud — black, red, white, yellow, and blue — each tied to a different therapeutic quality. Mud therapy in this tradition corresponds to the earth element itself, used to ease inflammation, support circulation, and calm the nervous system.

GETTING STARTED

White clay (multani mitti, or Fuller's Earth) is the gentlest starting point and the most widely available in Western stores today.

03

ITALY'S FANGO: MUD MATURED LIKE WINE

Fango therapy, with roots the Romans themselves popularized, treats mud almost like a slow-fermented ingredient: volcanic clay is mixed with mineral spring water and left in maturation tanks for 50 to 60 days at a steady temperature, allowing natural microbial communities to enrich it before it's ever applied to skin.

GETTING STARTED

You won't be maturing mud for two months at home — but it's worth knowing that traditional fango is a slow, deliberate process, not an instant fix.

04

BUILDING YOUR OWN CLAY TREATMENT

At home, the everyday equivalents are bentonite clay, kaolin clay, French green clay, or Dead Sea mud, mixed with water (or a gentler liquid like aloe vera) into a spreadable paste. Apply to clean, dry skin in an even layer, leave on for 10–20 minutes, and rinse before the clay fully hardens and cracks.

COMMON CLAYS

Bentonite clay · Kaolin clay · French green clay · Dead Sea mud

05

SAFETY AND CAUTIONS

Patch test any new clay on a small area of skin before a full application, and avoid using it on broken skin, open wounds, or active rashes. Letting clay dry completely and crack on the skin can pull moisture out along with impurities, which is harder on sensitive or already-dry skin — rinse a little earlier if your skin runs on the drier side.

SIGNS TO STOP AND RINSE

Stinging, burning, or spreading redness beyond mild, temporary flushing.

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This is general educational information, not medical advice. Avoid clay and mud treatments on broken skin, active rashes, or infections, and check with a dermatologist first if you have a diagnosed skin condition.