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Porn, homoeroticism and almost all things sexual are free from taboo-status but we're not quite as liberated as we think – one very basic function is still a conversation no-no: in short, pooh is taboo.

We can just about stomach the existence of colonic irrigation but it's still perceived as a slightly outré practice favoured by somewhat fanatical health-freaks.

Such opinions are misguided – for starters there are almost 6,000 colonics carried out every month. It is neither habit-forming nor is it linked to any unpleasant side-effects.

And a recent study by surgeon Peter McDonald published in the reputable *Colorectal Medical Journal* goes a small way to bring it out of the alternative-therapy mainframe.

Newspaper and magazine articles that touch on the risqué topic of colonics tend to steer clear of dirty words like stool, faecal matter and mucous, so there's still a lot of confusion surrounding the benefits of the practice.

I went to see Amanda Griggs at the Balance Health Clinic in London and began a session of six colonics to try and understand how to properly benefit from colonic hydrotherapy. Britain has the highest incidence of bowel cancer in the world and one in five people suffer from Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

The statistics are shocking, and when nutritionist Patrick Holford recently presented the largest-ever health and diet survey to the House of Commons he informed the Minister for Health that 30,000 people (80 per cent of the study) were failing to have a single bowel movement every day.

Colonic hydrotherapy is regarded by those in the know as the Rolls-Royce of colon cleansing, but because colon health is recognised as one of the most neglected areas of the medical establishment, few people think of it when looking into de-toxing or thinking of alternative means to combat bloating, constipation or general low energy.

A colonic involves inserting just over an inch of plastic tubing into the rectum (not the most pleasant feeling but certainly not painful) while warm water is gently released into the large intestine. This gentle washing effect works throughout the five foot of our large intestine and the water induces peristaltic contractions in the colon, encouraging it to part with unwanted debris.

Impacted matter can build up on the colon wall or it can become lodged in pockets and crevices of the intestine and stay there for years – this can then be re-absorbed into the blood supply and toxicity builds up. All this leads to a sluggish colon and diminishes the space for good bacteria to flourish.

Up to two gallons of water can be used during a colonic, but no more than a litre will be inside the colon at a time. The colonic therapist controls the release of water that enters through a clear plastic tube. It is simply the force of gravity that causes the water and accompanying debris to flow back out.

A therapist will be able to tell much about your internal, digestive health by looking at the expelled material as well as through gently massaging the abdomen. They are trained to detect and feel for bubbles of gas. Many, like Amanda, are trained in other disciplines such as reflexology and lymphatic drainage, and activating pressure points in the hand or foot can encourage more effective release.

Amanda tells me over 70 per cent of clients return for regular colonics and the received wisdom is that a one-off session will be insufficient to really cleanse one's insides.

The first colonic should last about an hour and a half and subsequent ones about 50 minutes. Regular colonics can encourage the bowel to start working better and you can gain a greater understanding of your own digestive issues as the therapist identifies problem areas.

In spite of my no-sugar, non-processed foods diet, I am apparently suffering from a bad build up of yeast. If a build-up of mucous, which demonstrates a weakened immune system, yeast or bubbles is physically seen, it has added impact on the patient.

Therapists believe that colonics are especially helpful in providing the impetus for a patient to try and make helpful changes. Indeed, I have actively taken to skin brushing and am trying the yogic breathing which Amanda tells me will aid my sluggish digestion.

The digestive system is not called the second brain for nothing – almost every chemical that is found in the brain is located in the digestive organs. In fact parts of the Old Testament acknowledge that the

bowel, not the heart, as the seat of emotions. Phrases like, going with your gut feeling and the existence of a "butterfly stomach" as well as the medical fact that half our nerve cells are located in our gut prove what a delicate and important part of our anatomy the gastrointestinal region is.

A colonic does not just make one feel emotionally lighter and more refreshed, one is quite literally rejuvenated from the inside.

If you suffer from chronic digestive problems, bad skin and fatigue a series of colonics can only be of help. But to experience long-term benefit further help is usually required.

Six treatments don't feel like enough for my own system, and the help I am getting from a superfood formula called Kiki Nature's Living Superfood which contains probiotics as well as herbal formulas from a range called Energetics, highly recommended by Amanda and other nutritionists I have spoken to, is all part of the parcel to help one feel lighter, brighter and generally in better health.

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To visit Amanda Griggs, call Balance 250 Kings Road 020 7565 0333 or visit The Association of Colonic Hydrotherapists website: www.colonic-association.org.

Recommended reading *The Tao of Detox* by Daniel Reid (Simon & Schuster £10.99).