

FLOATING TO WELLNESS



By Toni Krasicki

Earlier this year I was asked to check out the latest floating therapy space to open it's doors in Sydney. The first thing I realise is that float tanks, without me noticing, are having a resurgence in the health sphere. I'm a floater from way back, first floating in the 1980s, then again in Byron Bay about 14 years ago!

I meet Austin Coons, the co-owner of Forever Floating in Paddington (Sydney), along with his wife, fitness model and personal trainer Ana Coppola Coons. Austin explains the value for those who need time-out from all the busyness of modern life, and the benefits that come from spending time in this sensory-reduced environment.

So what is a float tank?

Historically, float tanks have been used for meditation and relaxation and in some instances, even as an alternative style of medicine.

The float tank itself looks like a space pod. It's filled with around 30cm of Epsom salt fuelled water that's kept at about 34.5°C. Once inside, the pod's lid slides closed and there's a light on the inside that can be switched on or off at anytime.

The health premise behind this weight-free environment is that joints and the nervous system receive some much needed relief from the pressure of gravity, which enables the body to then channel the extra energy into recovery.

Being a sensory-reduced environment means the float tank is also an ideal space to relax and rejuvenate, which for many can act like an alternative to having a massage or taking a mind/body class.

Forever Floating currently offers two float tanks, but Austin says they are hoping to eventually expand, given they have the space available for an additional four tanks.

If you've ever had the opportunity to visit the Dead Sea, this is pretty much how it works – you just float and allow the magnesium-rich water to suspend you. There's no chance of sinking, so if you fall asleep – even better!

If you have hygiene concerns, there's no need! Due to the tank water consisting of 40 per cent Epsom salt, the water is deemed sterile, as no nasty organisms can survive in salt concentrations above 10 per cent. The water is also filtered through a one-micron-sized filter, and the water's purity, alkalinity, pH and temperature are constantly monitored to ensure that it is of exceptional quality for every subsequent float.

What do you do?

When you arrive, you are shown to your private room, which includes the floating pod and a shower, and you're provided with instructions to take a shower, pop in the earplugs provided, step into the pod,

pop a blow up pillow behind your head (optional), then lie back and enjoy! The music will stop after about 10 minutes, leaving you with your thoughts and/or dreams, and it recommences again 10 minutes before the end of the session, to alert you that your blissful state is coming to a close! When you get out, you shower again to remove the salt, and then slowly re-enter the world. At Forever Floating you can hang around, enjoy the beanbags and sip water until you're ready to deal with reality!

What do you need?

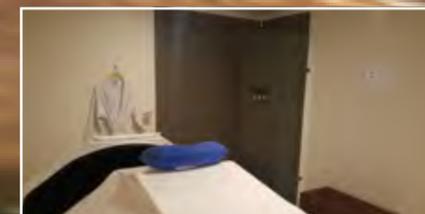
Essentially, you only need your birthday suit, but if you're worried about modesty in your own private pod, a swimsuit can be worn. There are towels, organic shampoo, conditioner, body wash and lotion to use, so anything else you think you'd use in the shower, you'll need to bring.

Austin recommends you avoid drinking coffee before your float, which is probably related to the caffeine interfering with your ability to chillout. He also suggests you are adequately fuelled, so that you don't go in hungry (there's nothing worse than relaxation being interrupted by a rumbling stomach!). Also hold off on the spray tan and a hair colouring, and save the shave or wax for another day because there's a lot of salt in there!

Forever Floating offers 75 minute floats for \$49, with special packages and memberships also available. If you drive there, be sure to ask about the free parking in advance. For more information visit www.foreverfloating.com

THE BENEFITS OF FLOATING

- Relieves stress and encourage relaxation.
- Reduces/eliminates chronic pain and arthritis.
- Enhances athletic performance and muscle recovery.
- Maximises creativity.
- Improves sleep.
- Offers an ideal medium for meditation .
- Helps eliminate addiction and depression.
- Creates an overall feeling of wellbeing.
- The epsom salt leaves your skin and hair feeling silky smooth.



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