

Spas That Heal

It's more than just massages at these resorts with a medical bent

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE SPA?

A spa may offer medical services, but that doesn't mean it has a doctor, or even a registered nurse, administering the treatments. According to the International Spa Association, of the 59 percent of spas offering medical treatments, 22 percent are located in a doctor's office or have a doctor on staff, and another 18 percent have a registered nurse or other medically trained staff.



Photo courtesy of Miraval



The various options offered at the Four Seasons/California Health & Longevity Institute range from medical services such as MRI scanning to consultations with nutritionists to alternative practices, such as meditation and breathing therapy. (Photo courtesy of Barbara Kraft)



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One featured treatment at Hills Health Ranch is a rose hip seed scrub.(Photo courtesy of Gary Cralle)

Spas aren't just for pampering anymore. According to the International Spa Association (ISPA), spas with a medical component are among the fastest-growing segments of the industry. But what does that term really mean?

While you can't usually write off your facial and body wrap as a health insurance claim, you can get medical services at a growing number of spas. Popular treatments administered by a doctor, nurse or "technician" include microdermabrasion, chemical peels, botox injections, photo-facial/intense pulsed light (IPL) therapy, and laser skin treatments. But a handful of destination spas are offering the medical screening services and physician consultations usually reserved for hospitals, as well as emotional support and inner healing.

Whether you want to lose a few pounds, get your head in a good place or undergo a two-day panel of diagnostic tests in between foot rubs and facials, here's a sampling of destination spas with a medical bent not far from home.

FOUR SEASONS/CALIFORNIA HEALTH & LONGEVITY INSTITUTE

Westlake Village, Calif. 818.575.3100 www.fourseasons.com/westlakevillage www.chli.com Cost: From \$550 per night per person, or \$875 per night for deluxe room, double occupancy, minimum three-night stay. Includes choice of massage or facial per day (one per room), consultation with a dietitian, exercise physiologist or lifestyle consultant, access to fitness centers and pools, and daily fitness classes.

Who wouldn't rather go to a sumptuous spa than a hospital for tedious diagnostic testing? Go for the deluxe physical for \$3,400 per person, or choose a la carte health and medical services -- from bone density testing, to MRI and ultrasound scanning, to a colonoscopy.

"We try to offer a comprehensive health and wellness program that combines the best of all that's out there," explains Dr. Terry Schaack, medical director and co-founder of the California Health & Longevity Institute. "We offer traditional medicine with equipment that rivals the Mayo Clinic, and more nontraditional wellness programs like acupuncture and healing touch." There's even a sleep clinic for \$2,000, which includes a room at the Four Seasons, one night of monitoring, and all diagnostic and interpretation costs by a physician.

THE WELLMAX CLINIC AT LA QUINTA RESORT & CLUB

La Quinta, Calif. 800.621.5263 www.wellmax.com Cost: The two main diagnostic plans are the Core Program, at \$7,250, and the Platinum Program, for \$11,250. Each takes about two days to complete. Accommodations at La Quinta and spa activities are extra.

"The first time my wife and I went to the WellMax Clinic, we each spent a couple of days there going through all kinds of tests," says George Reece, 57, who has gone to the spa-medical center annually for the past five years. "We did blood work, a cardio and stress check, bone density testing, and some ultrasound work on our vital organs. These were things that we would have never thought of checking out with our busy lives." All this, and Reece, a managing partner of a real estate development firm in Tacoma, also had time for a few rounds of golf.

The philosophy of WellMax is to be proactive -- but it comes with a price tag. Although the cost is high, Reece would say it's well worth it. The diagnostic testing he had done detected a potentially fatal defect in his heart that was repaired through laser technology. He says he also got his cholesterol under control and worked on his overall physical health through lifestyle and health counseling at the clinic.



Jill Martin of the WellMax Clinic at LaQuinta monitors a patient during a cardiac exercise stress test.

MIRAVAL RESORT

Tucson, Ariz. 800.232.3969 www.miravalresort.com Cost: Rates start at \$535 per night for double occupancy and include luxury accommodations, three gourmet meals daily, unlimited snacks (excluding alcoholic beverages), a \$125 credit toward a spa treatment or round of golf, access to all scheduled activities and transportation to and from Tucson International Airport.

Some may call it rehab lite, but more and more people are looking to find emotional relief as well as physical pampering on their spa getaway. Spas such as Miraval are blending rubs and scrubs meant to pamper with programs that de-stress as well as provide lifestyle counseling.

"This was different than any other destination spa I've been to because it was a 24/7 program, not just visiting a spa within the resort for a massage, facial and pedicure," says Kevin Dellascio, 43, CEO of a defense contracting business in Niceville, Fla., who attended a five-day couples program with his wife,

Dana. "They offer everything from climbing a 35-foot-high pole and jumping off together, to attending a counseling session with a relationship therapist, to having a computerized biophysical analysis that measured our body fat and a consultation with a nutritionist. This complete approach to restoring balance is helpful in business as well as your personal life."

THE HILLS HEALTH RANCH

100 Mile House, B.C. 800.668.2233 www.hillshealthranch.com Cost: A wide variety of activities and plans, starting at \$503 for a two-night "spa spoiler," which includes accommodation, gourmet meals, exercise classes and hikes, spa pools, saunas and exercise equipment, a sing-along hayride party, a body massage and a pedicure.

This 1,200-acre dude ranch surrounded by 20,000 acres of lakes and trails is a self-contained adventure land. The programs focus on weight loss and strength training through rugged adventures in the wild as well as herbal wraps and massage. The staff, which includes a large number of health professionals, helps guests design a wellness plan for life with fitness assessments and a computerized lifestyle analysis.

MEDICAL DAY SPAS

If you don't have time for a weekend getaway, check out these day spas that offer traditional and nontraditional medically based procedures as well as the usual facials and massages.

AGELESS CENTER FOR REJUVENATION

Seattle www.agelessinseattle.com/policies.htm 206.467.1000 Check out the Skin Fitness for Men. This 60-minute facial treatment repairs and rejuvenates skin using deep pore cleansing and an enzyme treatment to remove dead skin cells. Follow up with a relaxing face and neck massage and a special moisturizer.

SPAHT HOMEOPATHIC MEDICAL SPA

Seattle www.thespaht.com 206.632.2030 Combines homeopathic medicine with hydrotherapy, craniosacral therapy and traditional massage to get at the source of whatever ails you from all angles. Programs for weight loss, aging gracefully, cleansing and detoxifying your system, among other things. Presided over by Dr. Tolle Murphy, who has a postgraduate degree in naturopathic

ESTHETIQUE MEDICAL SPA

Tacoma www.aestheticcentre.org 253.284.9230 Cosmetic surgery, massage services and rejuvenation treatments -- all under one roof. Some popular services for men include Botox, fillers, massage and laser treatments for spider veins, and facial rejuvenation.

AJUVA MEDICAL SPA

Spokane ajuvamedicalspa.com 509.468.SKIN (7546) Obstetrician/gynecologist Debra Ravisia and her staff focus on anti-aging with a holistic approach to preventive care -- exercise, weight-loss programs, supplements, skin care products and hormone therapy. The clinic isn't just for women, though, with services including body-sculpting wraps and liposuction, rejuvenating facials and dermabrasion -- something for everyone.

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