



Body wraps are all the rage at spas these days -- you might have even seen billboards or TV commercials touting the miraculous slimming benefits of these treatments. Women arrive at the spa in the morning and leave an hour later, suddenly three dress sizes smaller and completely free of cellulite!

The "slimming" wrap treatment is only the tip of the body-wrap iceberg. They're suggested to improve arthritis, skin ailments and cellulite. "Detox" wraps claim to draw toxins out of your body, and during a "power wrap," you work out on an elliptical machine while wrapped in bandages soaked in an electrolyte solution (yes, that is for real).

For a garden-variety body wrap, you lie on a massage table and get rubbed down with an exfoliating scrub, in whatever variety you picked from the menu (most spas offer a few options). After you rinse off in a shower, the therapist applies the wrap ingredients (maybe seaweed, mud, clay or an herbal or fruit product) to your body, covering it with a layer of plastic wrap. When you're all wrapped up, you might be further covered with sheets, towels and thermal blankets. And then you'll be left alone to relax -- and sweat -- for about 30 minutes.

So, those are the facts -- but the unwrapping point is where fantasy (and advertisements) start to separate from reality. The spas want you to believe that you'll be emerging from your wrap as if from a cocoon -- a completely relaxed, moisturized, detoxified, cellulite-free and noticeably slimmer butterfly. But if you're familiar with the phrase "too good to be true" -- I we think you are -- you probably won't be surprised to learn that the results probably won't be so dramatic. Experts warn especially not to expect medical results for conditions like arthritis.

As long as you're not expecting to permanently lose 10 pounds and 3 inches off your waist, there are some benefits to body wraps. No one will argue that it feels pretty cozy to be wrapped up and left to relax in a dimly lit room for a half-hour or so. Your skin will most likely feel soft and supple after being slathered in moisturizers. And you could lose some water weight and see

improvement in your cellulite -- but just be prepared for the results to diminish after a couple of days.