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### Summary

**Objectives:** This study was designed to investigate the effect of foot-bath with or without the essential oil of lavender on the autonomic nervous system.

**Design:** Randomized crossover controlled study. **Setting:** Nursing college, Nagano, Japan.

**Intervention:** Young women sat with their feet soaked in hot water for 10 minutes with and without the essential oil. **Outcome measures:** An electrocardiogram, finger tip blood flow and respiratory rate were recorded. Autonomic function was evaluated using spectral analysis of heart rate variability. **Results:** The foot-bath caused no changes in heart or respiratory rates, but produced a significant increase in blood flow. Using spectral analysis, the parasympathetic nerve activity increased significantly during the both types of foot-bath. In the case of the foot-bath with the addition of essential oil of lavender, there were delayed changes to the balance of autonomic activity in the

direction associated with relaxation. Conclusion: A hot foot-bath and oil of lavender appear to be associated with small but significant changes in autonomic activity.



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