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Inside a Desert Hot Springs Retreat Focused on Colon Care

Guests at We Care Spa experience daily colonics, massages, and not much food—all in the name of health



Courtesy of We Care Spa

By  <https://sandiegomagazine.com/author/amber-gibson/>



I'm laying on my back with my knees up in a classic birthing position (<https://sandiegomagazine.com/everything-sd/health-fitness/the-pelvic-floor-therapy-you-may-need/>), but instead of pushing out a baby, I see a stream of bile flowing out through a clear plastic tube. This is my first colonic, and I'm both nervous and curious.

Would my colon therapist know that I didn't meticulously follow my pre-fast instructions? I was supposed to avoid alcohol (<https://sandiegomagazine.com/everything-sd/health-fitness/the-kids-are-alright-theyre-just-sober-now/>), caffeine, dairy, and meat for several days before arriving at this wellness resort (<https://sandiegomagazine.com/features/ultimate-san-diego-spas-guide-2024/>) in Desert Hot Springs, California. I had good intentions, but weak resolve.



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The resort, We Care Spa (<https://wecarespa.com/>), is serving as my home for the next three days, though many guests stay for up to a week. Daily colonics are the crux of the wellness programming here, but there are 40 different spa services (<https://wecarespa.com/spa-treatments/>) on offer, from massages and body scrubs to facials and art therapy (<https://sandiegomagazine.com/charitable-sd/our-arts-foundation-marcia-johnson/>).



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Upon arriving, I was welcomed with two orientation classes. The first walks guests through the daily drink plan, which includes a multitude of supplements, tea, juice, and a once-daily vegetable soup, intended to “detoxify” and heal the body (https://sandiegomagazine.com/everything-sd/health-fitness/cosmetic-acupuncture/) with a nutrient-dense liquid diet.

The second orientation was more spiritual. I was invited to set intentions for my stay, and I learned about the plethora of classes (https://wecarespa.com/our-classes/), treatments, and amenities available to support my personal journey. Guests can schedule a numerology reading with life path consultant Ronda, wander through a meditative stone labyrinth with a medicine wheel, or relax on a floating bed designed to echo the feeling of being in a mother’s womb.

Personally, I came to get my insides cleaned out (https://sandiegomagazine.com/features/yoni-steam-spa-san-diego/). I am generally healthy with daily bowel movements, but I’m a wellness junkie and have tried everything from cryotherapy to sensory deprivation Samadhi tanks (https://www.floattank.net/samadhi-spa/). Colonics are my latest adventure.

My 20-something-year-old colon therapist, Eladia, is gentle with newbies like myself—a boon, considering that we get up-close-and-personal pretty quickly. She tells me that she gives herself weekly colonics, and we chit-chat through my entire 45-minute session. I learn that humans have five organs that eliminate waste (https://sandiegomagazine.com/features/waste-not-drink-up/) from the body: the liver, kidneys, colon, skin, and lungs.

Colonics are said to reduce bloating, relieve constipation, and release waste, bile, and debris within the five-foot long human colon. Once you get past the weirdness of watching pieces of poop floating by in a tube, it’s a relatively painless process.





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While advocates for colon cleanses, like We Care Spa founder Susana Belen, claim that colonics help improve energy levels, digestion, and immunity, others, such as Mayo Clinic (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/expert-answers/colon-cleansing/faq-20058435#:~:text=They%20believe%20that%20colon%20cleansing,cleansing%20can%20sometimes%20be%20harmful.>) and Cleveland Clinic (<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/colon-cleansing-is-it-safe>), do not recommend colon cleanses, arguing that it can interfere with regular colon function and the gut microbiome. Many doctors say that the colon cleanses itself and that there's no scientific evidence that colonics are helpful. I didn't personally feel all that different after three days of colonics, although I was amazed they could still suck poop out of me after three days with no real food.



Post-treatment recommendations include drinking copious amounts of water and easing slowly back into your normal diet, first eating lighter meals with an emphasis on vegetables and fruit (<https://sandiegomagazine.com/features/28-of-the-best-vegetarian-and-vegan-restaurants-to-try-in-san-diego/>). For ideal results, proponents say, the cleanse should be a hard reset, a precursor to a long-term lifestyle change that involves fewer animal products and less alcohol and caffeine.



Courtesy of We Care Spa

I certainly eat lightly during my stay. Twice a day, guests at We Care Spa receive a “detox drink” (<https://wecarespa.com/liquid-nutrition-detoxification/>) made of organic psyllium husk and seed, apple, fig, prune, and olive oil. A natural laxative, it’s meant to loosen internal waste. Like chia seeds, psyllium husk expands in your stomach, and the drink is a little gritty but sweet. Surprisingly, it does a remarkable job of making you feel full throughout the day and it doesn’t taste half-bad (though I would add cacao powder to satisfy my chocolate cravings). However, as a food journalist, I find the mundanity of consuming the same few drinks and supplements each day difficult.

In the evenings, we eat vegetable soup, a different flavor each day. We’re allowed to season our soups with Bragg’s liquid aminos (<https://www.bragg.com/products/liquid-amino>), curry powder, oregano, garlic powder, and paprika—a limited palette for culinary creativity. Dinner is also the most social time of day, with everyone congregating at the Oasis House lobby for the meal. I trade restaurant recommendations with a friendly mother-daughter duo (<https://sandiegomagazine.com/everything-sd/living-design/neighborhoods/ms-vintage-reimagined-in-north-park/>) from Los Angeles, and we fantasize about what our first meal will be once we check out.

Guests receive massages and facials each day. In between spa treatments, I bounce up and down on a mini-trampoline outside my suite, which We Care Says helps stimulate the lymphatic system (<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/body/21199-lymphatic-system>).



Courtesy of We Care Spa

Many of the spa treatments are designed to facilitate colonics. The system recovery master treatment, for example, is a warm castor oil wrap combined with reflexology and scalp massage. This treatment can feel a little uncomfortably hot, as it's meant to help you sweat out toxins.

I much prefer my deep tissue massage with cupping. My massage therapist Luis is excellent, leaving deep purple marks all over my back and shoulders that hurt so good and render my muscles limber and loose. It's the perfect antidote to far too many hours hunched over my laptop.

The executive suites are spacious and well-equipped with exercise equipment, a deep soaking tub with bath salts and body brushes, and outdoor daybeds, where guests can enjoy colorful desert sunsets and listen to howling coyotes.





Courtesy of We Care Spa

Overall, the program is lenient and can be customized however you choose. If you need more calories, there are protein shakes (<https://sandiegomagazine.com/food-drink/got-mylk-san-diegos-nut-free-non-dairy-alternative/>) available upon request, and you can be as social as you wish or keep to yourself. If you're at a period of transition in your life (<https://sandiegomagazine.com/features/essay-overcoming-grief/>), We Care Spa is a beautifully serene retreat to reset, focus on your well-being, and do some soul searching. As for me—after three colon cleanses, I did feel a little lighter on my way to a glass of champagne to celebrate.

Would I come back again? Well, I wouldn't say I'm a colonic convert, but it was an interesting experience, and I'm glad I tried it. Taking three days to really focus on myself and my well-being (<https://sandiegomagazine.com/features/monima-wellness-center/>) was a really intentional way to start the year and a reminder of how important and precious my health is.

I'm definitely more mindful about staying hydrated and chewing more thoroughly—it helps with digestion. I'm also eating a lot less meat these days, even if I do still indulge in wine a few times a week and I cannot refuse ice cream (<https://sandiegomagazine.com/food-drink/unique-ice-cream-gelatino-flavors-to-try-this-summer/>). The sensual daily joy I find in food isn't worth eliminating entire food groups for, but I'm more conscientious about when I indulge. Balance, to me, is paying attention to my hedonist cravings (<https://sandiegomagazine.com/features/the-not-so-lonely-hedonist/>) while simultaneously caring for my body with water, sleep, regular yoga practice, probiotics, and massages.

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