

# Therapy with more than a pinch of salt

By **JANE CONNOLLY**

**ASTHMA** sufferers are reportedly feeling the benefits of spending time in Tunbridge Wells' own salt cave.

The drug-free treatment claims to reduce the symptoms of asthma and other respiratory problems by exposing patients to the natural benefits that salt can provide.

After spending hour-long sessions in a room lined with the mineral, while breathing in fine salt particles pumped into the air, visitors to the facility have reported being able to breathe easier, sleep better and other improvements.

The method was invented in Russia in 1982 and the UK's first salt cave was opened in London last year.

Director Sofia Benke revealed that since the Tunbridge Wells branch opened in Vale Road in July, hundreds of people have taken advantage of the medication-free treatment.

"We have two rooms, one for adults and one for children," she said. "There is salt on the floor and walls and the most important thing about the experience is the salt in the air, which clients breathe in during the session. Two mechanical devices grind or crush salt into fine particles, which are even smaller than particles of cigarette smoke and



**THE WHITE STUFF:** Salt cave therapy room

hardly noticeable to the naked eye. It's very important that the particles are so fine, because with normal breathing they can get into the lungs, sinuses and respiratory system."

As well as providing relief of respiratory problems, the treatment also appears to work for associated skin conditions such as

eczema. Patients can wear normal clothes in the salt cave and are given hair nets and shoe covers to maintain hygiene. The first session is free for new clients and the treatment then costs from £35 for a single one-hour visit.

"The reason salt is very beneficial for various problems is because salt has antibacterial properties, so we can maintain a stable hypoallergenic and antibacterial environment," Mrs Benke said. "It's very clean and easy to breathe in there. Salt also has anti-inflammatory properties and reduces inflammation problems in a natural way."

Some patients have claimed they have less need for their medication since undergoing treatment in the salt cave, which has raised some concerns in the medical community.

But Mrs Benke stressed that she does not advise her clients to stop taking their prescribed drugs in favour of salt therapy.

"We never tell people to stop taking their medication. We offer complementary therapy and we can help to make their life easier," she said.

"We have feedback from children who have not been able to play a whole football match before, but now they can. Also, some children could not sleep through the night before and those improvements are great. Many times, when parents come to us they are really desperate and it seems to help a lot for kids."

To find out more, see [www.saltcave.co.uk](http://www.saltcave.co.uk).

## Schools rank high

SCHOOLS in west Kent are among the highest performing in the country, according to the latest survey by a national newspaper.

The annual Sunday Times Parent Power guide ranks and provides information on the best state and independent secondary and primary schools in Britain.

According to the survey, which includes 2,000 top schools, Sevenoaks School comes ninth in the top 10 independent secondary schools in the south east and 21st nationally, which is down from 14th in 2009.

In the top 10 state secondaries in the region, the Judd School came fourth (25th nationally), Tonbridge Grammar School was sixth (33rd nationally) and Tunbridge Wells Girls' Grammar School came eighth (36th nationally).

Primary schools also performed well with St Thomas' Primary School in Groombridge coming fourth in the regional top 10 and 19th nationally. In the independent rankings, Derwent Lodge preparatory school in Tonbridge was eighth best in the south east and came 25th nationally.

The guide is in its 20th year and is said to be the most authoritative survey of the country's best schools.

## Reindeer visitors

TWO of Santa's special helpers will move into a new temporary home at a garden centre in the run-up to Christmas.

The male and female reindeer will take up residence in an enclosure at Millbrook Garden Centre in Crowborough on December 10.

Children will be able to see the animals every day and meet Father Christmas during the weekends of December 11-12, and 18-19.

Tammy Woodhouse, the managing director of the garden centre, said: "They will be here until midday on Christmas Eve, when they have to rush off for a busy evening helping Father Christmas deliver presents."



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