

TRIED & TESTED:

Lava Shells Massage

Can hot seashells knock out the knots in our tester's back?

tester: rose crompton image: cally gibson

WHAT IS IT? New from the US, lava shells massage is a more eco-friendly version of the hot stone massage, using South Pacific tiger-striped clam shells that have been cleaned and polished. Unlike hot stones, which are heated in electric water baths, lava shells are powered by LavaGel – a natural, self-heating mixture of minerals, including algae and sea kelp, stored in a teabag-style sachet. The sachet is tucked inside the closed clam shell through a hole in the top and then salt water is added before the shell is sealed with a bung. The LavaGel reacts with the salt water, generating up to 125°C of heat for an hour, which is then radiated by the shell.

This massage is designed for deep muscle tension relief and can also help relieve irritable bowel syndrome. Home kits containing one shell and four LavaGel sachets are also available.

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS?

I booked myself in for a 30-minute back massage at a local health club after work, as my muscles are often tense from sitting at a desk all day. On arrival, I was asked to lie face-down, topless on a treatment table and my masseuse covered my back in massage oil, gently rubbing it in to warm up my skin. She then placed two of the lava shells in the middle of my back, just below my shoulder blades, and lightly pressed down on them. The shells felt quite hot at first but my skin quickly acclimatised to the temperature and the heat became similar to that of a hot-water bottle. The masseuse then ran the shells up my back from my lower spine to my neck, applying firm pressure as she went. The feel of the acute end of the shells digging into me was *amazing* as I could



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actually feel the knots in my back being kneaded out.

After 15 minutes, the masseuse folded my arms loosely behind my back so my shoulder blades stood out. Using one shell at a time, she kneaded my shoulders in a circular motion, swapping shells halfway through, as the longer they're used the cooler they become and they need to be left to stand in order to reheat.

The treatment finally ended with the masseuse softly placing my arms by my sides and gently gliding both shells across the top of my back and down my arms to rest in my hands. The shells were then removed and the masseuse covered me with a sheet and a blanket and left me to relax for five minutes before bringing me a drink of water.

DOES IT WORK? Although it was only 30 minutes long, the massage left me feeling completely relaxed and all the tension that had built up in my back from work vanished. In fact, it'll be worth doing some overtime just to give myself an excuse to book in for a 60-minute all-over body massage next time. 🐘

A 30-minute lava shell back massage costs £25. Other treatments range from a 15-minute tummy massage to a 60-minute all-over massage, with prices starting at £15. Our tester's treatment took place at the Harbour Club, Watermeadow Lane, London SW6 2RR. For your nearest lava shell masseuse, or to buy a lava shell at-home kit for £29.95, see SharedBeautySecrets.com or call 0186 933 8890.