

Therapy in a therapeutic cave for chronic respiratory diseases

Results of a scientific study

Participants:

- 9 therapeutic tunnels (Italy: 1, Austria: 1, Germany: 7);
- 208 patients (asthma, COPD, long COVID)
- German Association of Therapeutic Tunnels (Dr Joachim Schwarz, Dr Wolfgang Fladerer), University Giessen (Prof. Natascha Sommer and 4 PhD students), Pretttau Healing Tunnel (Dr Beatrice Barbolan)

Duration: October 2023 – July 2025

Procedure: Comparison of the treatment group (3-week stay in the healing tunnel) and the control group (no stay in the healing tunnel) at 3 assessment points

Results:

Asthma: A total of 107 patients with asthma took part in the study.

The patients who underwent the treatment showed significant improvements in lung function (FVC, FEV1, PEF, MIP, MEP) following treatment, some of which were still detectable 3 months after treatment. In addition, quality of life had improved significantly and the condition was better controlled. These results were also still evident 3 months after the end of the treatment.

COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, formerly known as chronic bronchitis, among other terms): 59 Patients with COPD took part in the study. This condition is very difficult to treat and can only be managed with limited success. Accordingly, we found no improvements in lung function following a three-week therapy session in the healing cave. However, the participants reported a significant improvement compared to those study participants who did not visit the healing cave. This was demonstrated using a standardised questionnaire (CAT).

Long Covid: 42 patients with Long Covid took part in the study. The breathing difficulties associated with Long Covid often cannot be detected using standard lung function tests. One exception is a test of the diaphragm's muscle strength, known as maximum inspiratory force.

Here, a significant improvement was observed among those who visited the healing tunnels. Furthermore, three months after the end of treatment, the patients reported that their breathing difficulties had decreased, their muscular endurance had improved, and anxiety or sleep disturbances had significantly reduced.

In summary, therapy in a healing tunnel provides significant relief for asthma, COPD and long COVID. The improvements are most pronounced in patients with asthma. As there are virtually no side effects, therapy in a healing tunnel can be recommended for chronic respiratory conditions.