

HOW INFRARED SAUNAS CAN HELP SUPPORT YOUR HEALTH



“Sauna is clearly associated with many health benefits, from cardiovascular and cognitive health to physical fitness and immune system support.”

Heat and sauna therapy for the purposes of healing, cleansing and purification is an ancient practice that can be found across cultures throughout hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

INFRARED SAUNA BASICS

Unlike a traditional sauna, infrared saunas don't heat the air around you. Instead, they use infrared lamps (that use electromagnetic radiation) to warm your body directly. Infrared saunas use infrared radiation lamps that emit both visible and infrared light, with the infrared light being either near- or far-infrared spectrums. Because of the deep tissue penetration, infrared saunas operate at cooler temperatures than dry saunas while still heating up the body, typically 45 to 60 degrees.

SOME OF THE BENEFITS THAT CAN BE ASSOCIATED USING A INFRARED SAUNA

Improved Skin Tone

Infrared sauna therapy dilates the blood vessels, increasing circulation throughout the body. This increased circulation not only helps remove waste products, but also helps deliver more oxygen and nutrients to the skin. Since our skin depends on these nutrients to form collagen (which keeps our skin firm), infrared sauna therapy can be a great way to improve skin tone and reduce wrinkles.

Flushes Out Toxins

Our immune systems are up against an arsenal of toxins: pesticides, toxic metals, PCBs in plastics, environmental pollution, and even GMOs which can cause an accumulation of toxins and a potentially weakened immune system. Infrared sauna treatments may give your body an extra push to eliminate these toxins. Specifically, this is achieved through sweating, which has been shown in several studies to increase detoxification and lower circulating levels of toxins in the body.

Weight Loss

It turns out taking a rest in an infrared sauna can also aid in weight loss. In a study of obese adults, researchers discovered "... body weight and body fat significantly decreased after 2 weeks of sauna therapy." Researchers theorize this is due to increased heart rate and the body working (i.e., burning calories) to cool itself.

Interestingly, in the same study, patients at a normal weight with loss of appetite experienced "increased caloric intake and improved feeding behavior."

Improves Cardiovascular Function

Infrared sauna therapy has also been shown to be good for your heart. These effects are due to the increased heart rate, blood flow, and improved blood pressure in patients using infrared sauna therapy. Interestingly, researchers compared the cardiac output patients experience in the sauna room to going on a brisk walk

Pain Relief

Another excellent aspect of infrared sauna therapy is its ability to reduce chronic pain – without the negative side effects of some pain medications. For instance, research out of the Netherlands found that patients with rheumatoid arthritis who underwent infrared sauna therapy for four weeks experienced reduced pain, stiffness, and fatigue following the treatment. Researchers speculate these benefits resulted from reduced inflammation levels, which lessen the friction between the patient's joints that result in chronic pain.

Wound Healing

Infrared sauna therapy may also have the remarkable ability to speed up the wound healing process. Specifically, research out of NASA has shown that infrared light significantly increases tissue growth and cell regeneration due to our mitochondria readily accepting infrared light.

Boosts Circulation

Infrared sauna therapy has also been found to improve circulation. This can have far-reaching benefits, from better skin tone (as discussed earlier) to lowered blood pressure.

Helps boost energy and may help chronic fatigue

A recent study found that Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), which results in extreme fatigue with no definitive cause, is greatly relieved in patients using infrared saunas. The study involved CFS patients sitting in a 60°C (140°F) sauna for 15 minutes, followed by bed rest under a blanket for 30 minutes in a separate room. This was performed once a day, five days a week, for a total of four weeks.

The results? Negative mood, anxiety, and depression levels significantly improved after the therapy. While there is no clear answer as to why infrared sauna therapy benefits CFS patients, researchers theorize it may be due to its ability to reduce oxidative stress and improve cardiac output, both of which have been linked to CFS.

It is important to note that the researchers state the patients didn't perceive the effects during the treatment, but definitely perceived less fatigue after the four weeks of treatment. So, if you're interested in undertaking infrared sauna treatment for fatigue, be aware that you may have to complete a month's worth in order to really feel the benefits. However, less than an hour a day for four weeks to relieve chronic fatigue seems like a worthwhile treatment.

What should you know before you try an infrared sauna

Avoid using an infrared sauna if you've been:

- drinking alcohol.
- If you feel ill or have a fever, it's best to wait to use the sauna until you're feeling better.
- Using an infrared sauna will cause you to sweat a lot, so you may feel lightheaded when you stand up. If this happens, make sure you get up slowly and sit down once you leave the sauna. Drink water immediately after finishing your session and wait for your body to cool down before doing anything else.
- If you have any health conditions such as high blood pressure, heart problems, or are under medical care, get cleared by your doctor before your first session. Even though infrared saunas have been found to be fairly safe, you don't want to take any chances when it comes to your health and safety.

How do you use an infrared sauna?

Drink water. Make sure you're hydrated before going into an infrared sauna. Drink a glass of water before your session. You can also bring water into the sauna, especially if you're sensitive to higher heats.

Choose the temperature. The average temperature for an infrared sauna ranges from 40 to 65 degrees with beginners starting out at the lower end and more experienced users at the higher end. If this is your first time, start with 40 degrees. You may want to stay at this temperature for a few sessions. You can always increase the temperature each session until you reach 65 degrees.

Length of time. For first-time users, start with 10 to 15 minutes. You can add time each session until you reach the suggested time of 20 to 30 minutes. Saunas come with a timer, so make sure to set it. You don't want to stay in there too long and risk becoming dehydrated.

Clothing. How you dress is your choice. Some people will wear bathing suits, while others prefer to wear active wear such as bike shorts and a crop. What you can do while in the sauna. Relax, read, meditate, listen to music etc. Just don't go to sleep.

After the session is over. When your session is done, it's suggested that you take your time and let your body cool down. Once cooled down, feel free to take a shower. Just make sure you are drinking plenty of water.

Number of sessions per week. It is recommended that you regular use will reap the most benefits. There is no limit to the number of sessions you can do in a week. If you are healthy and have been using infrared saunas for some days, you can use the sauna daily. For beginners ease yourself in with no more than 2-3 sessions per week.