



Wellness News Network™

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Issue 3, September 2015

THE RESTORATIVE EFFECTS OF SAUNAS

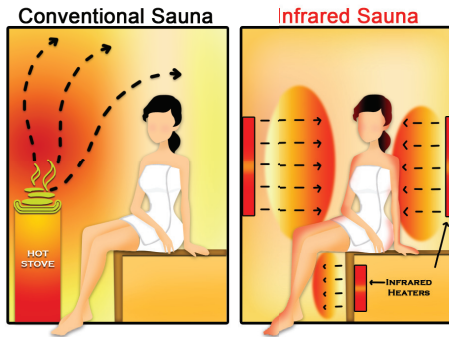
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Introduction

A sauna is a wood-lined room or small house designed for heat sessions. Sauna heat sessions can involve dry or wet heat and are intended to promote health in several important ways, such as relieving stress, reducing muscle and joint aches and enhancing cardiovascular function. Saunas are particularly popular in Finland and Estonia, though many cultures around the world engage in some form of sweat bath for health benefits.

Saunas - which can reach temperatures of 185 degrees F or 85 degrees C, or more, cause profound physiological effects. According to Harvard Health Publications, saunas can cause a rapid increase in your skin temperature, boost your heart rate by 30 percent or more and cause you to shed a pint of sweat during even short sessions.¹ Your chiropractor may prescribe sauna therapy to help augment your in-office treatments. You should always talk with your chiropractor before using sauna therapy for health purposes, as this therapy may not be appropriate for everyone.



Conventional vs. Infrared

The two basic sauna styles are conventional and infrared. Conventional saunas warm the air, while infrared saunas warm objects. You can use a conventional sauna to create a high heat, low humidity environment and generate temperatures in the range of 185 to 195 degrees F (80 to 90 degrees C). In a conventional sauna, you splash water over heated stones and this water is vaporized to create a dry heat that has soothing effects. Infrared saunas produce infrared radiant heat, which creates a milder environment and warming effect. Infrared radiant heat is absorbed by the surface of your skin and heats your body directly.

Relaxation & Feelings of Well-Being

Saunas are best known - and most commonly used - for aiding relaxation

QUESTION:

What are some of the benefits of sauna therapy?

- A) relieve stress
- B) promote deeper sleep
- C) weight loss
- D) all of the above

ANSWER:

A) & B)

TRUE or FALSE:

Conventional saunas produce radiant heat

ANSWER:

False – Infrared saunas produce radiant heat

Finish this sentence...

A sauna session should last no longer than...

- A) 5 to 10 minutes
- B) 10 to 15 minutes
- C) 15 to 20 minutes

ANSWER:

C) 15 to 20 minutes

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and creating feelings of well being. Many people use the sauna to help reduce stress levels. The sauna's heat helps relax your body, including tight muscles and the sauna is a place to unwind and find relief from stress in other aspects of your life. Improved blood flow and oxygen supply relaxes both your body and your mind, leading to feelings of well-being and a sense of rejuvenation. An article published in the journal *Physiology* states that the principle reason for sauna's continuing popularity is its ability to evoke pleasant feelings of deep relaxation.²

Cardiovascular Health Benefits

The health-positive effects of saunas may extend well beyond relaxation and feelings of well-being. A 2009 study published in the journal *Canadian Family Physician* states that there is at least some evidence that far-infrared saunas may help normalize blood pressure and treat congestive heart failure.³ Another study published in 2001 in the *American Journal of Medicine* notes that sauna bathing is safe for most people with coronary heart disease with stable angina pectoris or old myocardial infarction or heart attack.⁴ This study also notes that sauna therapy may not be appropriate for individuals who have unstable angina pectoris or severe aortic stenosis or narrowing of the aortic artery. Individuals who have experienced a recent myocardial infarction should also avoid sauna therapy.



Additional Health Benefits

Additional health benefits of sauna therapy may include the soothing of joint aches and pains, the cleansing of skin and flushing of toxins from the body and the promotion of deeper sleep. According to a 2011 review article published in the *Alternative Medicine Review: A Journal of Clinical Therapeutics*, people who have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, chronic fatigue, chronic pain or addictions may also benefit from sauna therapy and that existing evidence supports the use of saunas for environmentally-induced illness.⁵



Considerations

Talk with your chiropractor before using sauna therapy for health purposes, especially if you are pregnant. Your chiropractor understands your unique health history and can assess your readiness for this treatment approach. Some good general rules sauna users should employ include avoiding alcohol and medications that may limit sweating, staying in the sauna for no more than 15 to 20 minutes at a time, drinking two to four glasses of water after each sauna session and avoiding sauna therapy if feeling ill.

Quote to Inspire

“To keep the body in good health is a duty...otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear.”

Buddha

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