

Infrared Sauna

As a complementary / alternative therapy



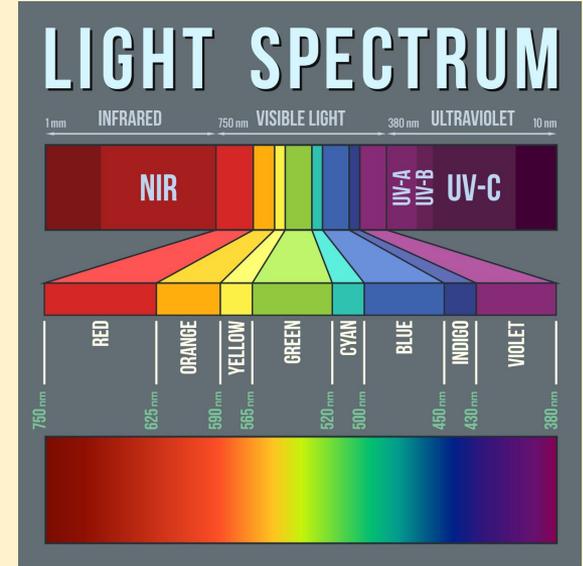
Tracy Donaldson, Sarah Minacci, Erica Stevenson

What is an Infrared Sauna?

Unlike traditional saunas which heat the air around you through steam, burning wood, or electric coils, infrared saunas use light to emit radiant heat (Sandell & Davies, 2023).

The heat of infrared saunas is also able to penetrate the body more deeply than warmed air of traditional saunas. This makes it so individuals in the sauna are able to work up a good sweat at a lower temperature than a regular sauna. Many people find this to be more comfortable and relaxing (Sandell & Davies, 2023).

The heat created by sauna causes the body to sweat, vasodilation of blood vessels, and an overall increased cardiovascular demand that is very comparable to walking at a moderate pace (Beever, 2009).



History

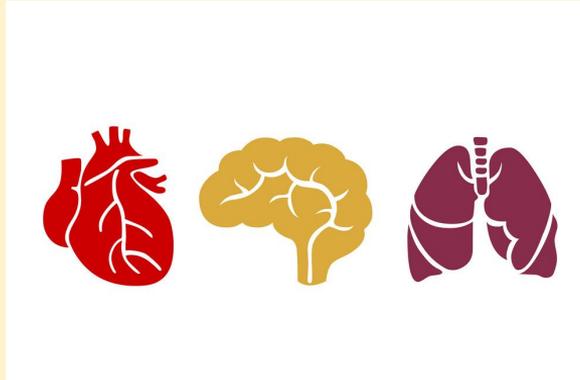
- Traditional saunas are thought to have originated in Finland around 2000 years ago, where they were carved into caves. The steam was created by heating stones over a fire and then pouring water on them. (Saunas.org, 2021)
- Sweat lodges were used for religious purposes in pre-hispanic South American cultures, as well as Native American, indigenous New Zealand, and African cultures. (Saunas.org, 2021)
- In 1893, Dr. JH Kellogg introduced the first electric saunas using incandescent light bulbs, which emit infrared light. (Saunas.org, 2021)
- NASA began to study infrared wavelengths in the 1960's. The study into far-infrared wavelengths caught the attention of a Japanese doctor. In 1965, he received the first patent a ceramic far infrared heater. (Health Mate UK, 2018)



- Infrared sauna technology stayed in Japan until 1979 when it became available to the public. (Health Mate UK, 2018)
- The technology has continued to be studied and evolve to become safer and more effective.

Benefits of Infrared Sauna

- Helps to facilitate lymph and blood circulation, which in turn helps strengthen the immune system
- Improve heart health by widening blood vessels and increasing blood flow
 - Which can lower risk for cardiovascular disease (Sandell & Davies, 2023)
- Soothes sore muscles
- Pain relief
- Promotes relaxation and better sleep
- Some evidence suggests it improves respiratory and neurocognitive function as well (Cleveland Clinic, 2022).
- This could be particularly beneficial to individuals with limited mobility or ability to exercise due to chronic health problems (Beever, 2009).

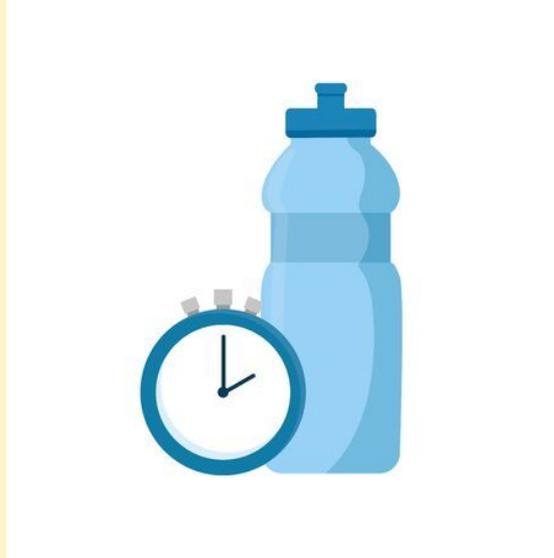


Evidence of Benefits

- A review from Beever (2009), found that infrared saunas helped to improve cardiac function, decrease symptoms of CHF, and significantly decrease systolic blood pressure.
- A study of infrared therapy on a geriatric population found it significantly improved oxygen gas exchange, usual walking speed, depression, and general improvement of several common geriatric symptoms (pain, insomnia, skin troubles, etc) (Sugie et al., 2020).
- Another review found that being in an infrared sauna for 15 minutes, 5 times a week, for 2-4 weeks resulted in a, “significant reduction in B-type natriuretic peptide, cardiothoracic ratio, and an improvement in left-ventricular ejection fraction” (Källström et al., 2018).
- It should be noted that these studies all involved small sample sizes, but none of them reported any adverse effects of the infrared sauna therapy.

General Advice

- Start low and slow- keep sessions below 30 minutes
- Stay hydrated!
- Rinse off afterwards



Possible Risks

- Can be harmful to fetus and cause birth defects during early pregnancy
- Sperm health- can kill sperm
- Pre-existing illness- should avoid if sick
- Dehydration
- Multiple Sclerosis- patients are heat intolerant



Where is it most commonly used?



Saunas are used globally, but are most widely used in Finland due to the long history of sauna use in Finnish culture. The usage has extended to many other European countries, such as Russia and Iceland (Saunas.org, 2021).

Infrared saunas are popular in North America due to their health benefits. Many gyms and athletic teams utilize them frequently thanks to their ability to soothe muscles and promote relaxation (Saunas.org, 2021).

Many countries in Asia are known for strong sauna cultures, namely Japan, India, and South Korea. In these countries, sauna use can be connected to religious and spiritual practices to cleanse the soul and heal the body (Saunas.org, 2021).

In Africa and the Middle East, saunas are used for whole body healing to treat the body in a holistic way (Saunas.org, 2021).

Cost

- Ranges from \$200 for a simple infrared blanket to thousands of dollars for a personal booth
- Cost varies by location and type
- Can be included in gym memberships, can buy memberships to spas
- Can pay by session
- Can buy sauna to have in home



Insurance

Most health care plans do not consider alternative or complementary therapy as part of traditional health care; therefore, it is usually not covered; however, it is based on the specific plan (bluecrossmn.com, 2023).



References

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