A Quick Overview of the Far Infrared Sauna

**How infrared saunas work:** The infrared sauna produces radiant heat, which heats the tissues of your body directly, rather than having to heat the air in between. Its wavelengths are similar to the rays of the sun, which are not visible to the human eye, but are felt as heat. Our bodies naturally produce infrared energy as a fuel to keep us warm and to assist in tissue repair. Sometimes, the body can use a boost in its level of infrared heat to provide deeper and more complete tissue healing. The body will selectively absorb the extra infrared heat provided by the sauna as it needs to for healing. The remaining rays are harmless. The infrared sauna calibrates its energy output with peak human infrared output, to maximize the deeper penetration of infrared rays as well as to produce resonant absorption of the heat into healing tissues. In fact, our palms emit infrared energy as well. This medium is the basis for palm healing, an ancient tradition in China.

![Infrared Sauna vs. Conventional Sauna](image)

*Instead of heating the air around you like a normal sauna, infrared rays directly heat your body tissue below the skin's surface, allowing you to sweat out toxins (among other benefits) instead of indirectly heating your body like a normal sauna. Just in case that made no sense to you, the picture above illustrates the process.*

**Benefits vs. traditional saunas:** Far Infrared rays are safe (like the red light from a heat lamp) but penetrate deeper (1.5” to 2” deeper) than the heat from a regular sauna. In addition, infrared rays do not heat the air as much as the dry heat of a traditional sauna, allowing you to stay longer in the sauna with less discomfort and tendency to overheat. As a result you...

- release more toxins from fat cells (which is where your body stores toxins)
- sweat up to 7 times more to discharge 7 times more toxins
- burn more calories (up to 600 kcal/30 minute session)
- break down cellulite
- relieve joint and muscle pain and stiffness
- can breathe comfortably for 30-45 minutes, since the air remains relatively cool (unlike a regular sauna, which may feel like the hot air is burning your lungs, or a steam bath, in which you may feel stifled).

**Specific Health Benefits of FIR**
Some of the health benefits of taking regular infrared saunas include:

- weight loss
- detoxification
• decreased joint inflammation and effects of arthritis
• increased extensibility of scar tissues
• decreased muscle spasm and post-exercise pain
• reduced acne breakouts
• improved skin tone and appearance
• pain relief
• increased blood flow
• decreases edema and swelling
• decreased blood pressure
• improved cardiovascular conditioning
• faster healing from soft tissue injuries

Quick overview of how to use the FIR for the best results:
• Drink at least 16 ounces of water or electrolyte replacement liquid
• Put a towel on the bench and a bath mat on the floor to absorb sweat; use a second towel to wipe down sweat
• Remove all your clothes if you feel comfortable with this (if not, wear the minimum, such as a bathing suit)
• Enjoy reading, listening to the CD player/radio, or relaxing and reflecting
• Come out when you feel like you've had enough – might be 10-15 minutes in the beginning, 30-40 minutes when you’re more experienced
• Don’t worry if you don’t sweat the first few times – your system may be gearing up
• Afterwards, wipe down with a hot towel from the towel steamer to really clean off all that has been discharged from your pores

Do not use if you . . .
• have just been drinking alcohol
• are already dehydrated: be sure to hydrate well before coming
• are pregnant; or are under 12 (kids can’t regulate heat like adults)
• have had a recent stroke or heart attack or have unstable angina
• have a pacemaker, medical pins or rods, cochlear implant, silicone implant
• have hemophilia

Use with professional guidance if you
• have excessive toxic chemical exposure (including recreational drugs)
• have cancer or MS or severe lupus
• have low blood pressure, or tend to faint easily
• are on insulin, steroids, diuretics or have a transdermal patch form of medication

If you have any of the conditions above then only go into the sauna under the close supervision of a physician or naturopath experienced with sauna detox. In this case, we will need a written prescription from your practitioner.
How to Take a Sauna in Detail

*****Be careful what you drink before taking a sauna****

Bring some water, diluted juice (coconut water is great!) or sports drink in with you if you plan to stay in the sauna for more than a few minutes. Avoid the sauna entirely if you’ve had an alcohol-containing drink.

1. Warm up the sauna to the temperature of your choice

Most people set the temperature for anywhere between 100-140 degrees Fahrenheit. If you are a beginner, and particularly if you are not in great health, you’ll want to start at 100 degrees or less. This way you’ll give yourself a chance to get used to the heat.

It’s okay to get into an infrared sauna 10-15 min. after you’ve turned it on, even if it has not yet reached your target temperature. The infrared sauna heaters will be warmed up, so you will get the infrared heat effect. The infrared-emitting heaters run continuously until the heat reaches the temperature you set.

2. Drink a glass of water

Have a glass of water before you enter the sauna. Take some water into the sauna with you, too. This is the most important step!

Other good drinks to take into the sauna with you would be a sports electrolyte replacement drink or coconut water.

3. Bring towels with you into the sauna

Bring in enough towels so you don’t have to touch the hot wood surfaces. The hot wood may feel burning hot to your bare skin, plus the towels will absorb the sweat and toxins you produce.

You’ll need a towel to sit on and a smaller towel to wipe down with once you start sweating. There should also be a towel or bath mat on the floor.

Your body will be excreting toxins, including heavy metals, with your sweat and the sauna bench or floor should not absorb these. If you can sweat through a towel easily, sit on several layers of folded towel.

4. If possible, take your sauna in the nude

If this is not possible for you, then wear the absolute minimum of clothes - not more than a bathing suit, for example.

You will not sweat more if you wear clothes in the sauna. This mistake is dangerous! Clothes prevent the sweat from cooling you down since it cannot evaporate on your skin. You will quickly overheat and also lose the benefits of wiping away your toxin-loaded sweat. When you wipe away the toxin-filled sweat, the toxins don’t sit in contact with your skin and will not be reabsorbed.

5. Relax, reflect, listen to music, read a book, or socialize

This is your time and it’s a time to relax. You can turn off the lights to rest your eyes and mind or meditate for a while. The sauna is a wonderful way to let go of the past as well. Feel free to read some of our books or listen to our meditation CDs on letting go.

What you can expect to happen in the sauna

Don’t expect to sweat right away when you enter the sauna. Even for someone whose body has learned how to take a sauna and sweats easily, it can take a few minutes or more to start sweating noticeably.
As you use the sauna more regularly, you'll notice that you sweat more profusely. Remember, the more you sweat, the more fluids you have to drink to make up for the loss.

Some people don’t sweat in the sauna initially
If you’re new to the sauna, you may not sweat at all the first few times. Some people have suppressed sweating mechanisms due to past pesticide exposure or other toxic exposures. If that’s the case for you, take things slowly. You won’t be able to tolerate the sauna as long or get the same benefits from it without sweating. As you keep at it, the problem should correct itself and your ability to sweat will return.
Also remember that you must be well hydrated to get a good sweat going. If you’re not sweating as well as usual in the sauna, try drinking some more water.

How frequently can I safely use the FIR sauna?
If you’re a healthy person - or one whose health issues don't prevent sauna use - you can take a sauna every day! In fact, you can sauna more than once a day, if you like. Dangers of the infrared sauna are few and avoidable. If you have specific health concerns, please consult your doctor or therapist for guidelines about the safest frequency of use for your body.

Precautions for the Far Infrared Sauna
While there are few dangers of the infrared sauna, it's important to know what they are.
Precautions for the infrared sauna are not related to the FIR rays themselves. FIRs do not carry the dangers that we associate with ultraviolet rays or x-rays.
Children cannot use the sauna in the same way that adults can. Please refer to the “Kids & Sauna” page at www.the-infrared-sauna-effect.com for more guidelines.
For adults, it's really more a matter of how healthy you are than how old you are. Sauna use by those over 80 is very, very common in Finland! Please consult your doctor or therapist if you have specific age-related questions.

A quick overview of FIR Sauna precautions
Affecting everyone:
• Overheating (heat exhaustion and heat stroke)
• Dehydration
• Use of the sauna while drinking or after drinking alcohol
• Depletion of electrolytes or minerals through sweating
• Temporary discomfort from the detoxification process
Avoid sauna use during an acute illness or injury if it may interfere with the natural healing process. For example, it is recommended to avoid sauna use during the first 48 hours of an acute sprain-type injury.

Affecting only some people:
• Adverse effects on certain medical conditions
• Interference with the absorption and/or effects of certain medications
• Adverse effects on some implants
In summary, the few dangers of the infrared sauna to the healthy, un-medicated person come from: overheating effects, dehydration, depleting your body's supply of minerals or electrolytes through profuse sweating (without the right kind of fluid replacement), and the effects of mobilizing stored toxins out of the body.

For people on medications and/or with medical conditions, a medical go-ahead or medical supervision is advisable.

**FIR Sauna precautions in detail**

**Overheating: Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke**

Anyone – even the healthiest of people - can overdo a sauna and overheat their bodies, causing heat-related illness. But this doesn’t happen without warning.

If you’re not familiar with the signs of heat stroke and heat exhaustion, here’s an Academy of Family Physicians web page on heat-related illnesses:

http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/healthy/firstaid/basics/088.html

Please note that your skin near the far infrared heaters may redden due to increased blood flow to the area. The redness will disappear within an hour or so after leaving the sauna (and it doesn’t feel uncomfortable).

**Dehydration and improper fluid replacement**

The fluids you excrete as you sweat must be replaced to keep you properly hydrated. Make sure to drink water and/or an electrolyte replacement beverage before, during and after sauna use. A good rule of thumb is to drink at least a ½ cup every 15 minutes.

Don’t drink alcohol before or during sauna use (this is a big no-no), and avoid sugary drinks or sodas, as well. These items cause an increased chance of dehydration.

**Medical conditions and the sauna**

Avoid sauna use completely in the case of:

- History of stroke
- Severe aortic stenosis
- Recent myocardial infarction (heart attack)
- Unstable angina pectoris
- Lupus erythematous, if you are on steroids (interferes with blood circulation)
- Brain tumors

Avoid sauna use completely unless under the care of a doctor with expertise in sauna detoxification in the case of:

- Multiple sclerosis
- Silicone implants

Check with your doctor in the case of:

- Your specific medical condition
- Pacemakers (check with doctor and manufacturer)
• Pins, rods and other implants, such as cochlear implants (but for sure don’t use the sauna if it causes you pain or other discomfort at the site of your implant)
• Diabetes (for sure start slowly and monitor your blood sugar)

While the above are some of the conditions which may be negatively affected by sauna use, definitely check with your doctor (or, better yet, a doctor experienced in sauna therapy) about your specific medication condition.

Are there dangers of the far infrared sauna for the heart?

Other than in the case of severe aortic stenosis, recent heart attacks and unstable angina…it doesn’t seem so.

Studies reported in mainstream medical journals have taught us that heart attacks (MI’s) are not associated with sauna use amongst healthy sauna users and that blood pressure doesn’t rise. Sauna use does not cause arrhythmias. In fact, high blood pressure may be lowered somewhat by regular sauna use.

Medications that can pose a danger in the infrared sauna

Since certain medications can be affected by the increased blood circulation and increased sweating and body heat. It’s best to check with your doctor (preferably a doctor knowledgeable in sauna detoxification) if your medication levels might be affected. Here are some examples of the types of medications that can be affected:

• **Transdermal medications.** The absorption rate of medicines applied by skin patches medication can change with sweating. The adhesive may also unglue from your skin.

• **Insulin.** If you’re a diabetic and your doctor gives you the go-ahead to use the sauna, he’ll also tell you to check your insulin levels for at least the first times to see how they are affected by the increased body heat.

Sauna can release residues of past medications

Minute remains or residues of past anesthetics, antidepressants, sedatives, chemotherapy or other medications you’ve used -- even psychedelic drugs -- can exit from storage during sauna use. When one of these makes its way back into the bloodstream on its way to begin eliminated, it can exert the same effects it did when you originally took it. If you think this is the case, take shorter saunas for a while.

Longer term precautions for the infrared sauna

There are a couple of things to watch out for over the long run with infrared sauna use.

1. **Depletion of the body’s reserves of one or more minerals and electrolytes.** If your nutrition is complete and you hydrate yourself properly in the sauna, you’re not likely to create a mineral or electrolyte deficiency through recreational sauna use a few times a week. If you enter into a systematic sauna detox program, you need to commit to learning about and implementing an electrolyte and mineral replacement plan. It’s not hard to do.

2. **Release of toxins out of your system may cause you symptoms as they are excreted.** This precaution should only pose a problem to someone using the sauna heavily and regularly -- mostly those people using the sauna for detoxification.

3. **Drugs stored in your fat can be pulled into your bloodstream in the sauna.** Some chemicals we take into our bodies during daily living are overwhelming or difficult for our bodies to deal with and — because they are fat soluble — end up getting stored in our fat. Any drug stored in your fat
from past exposure, including anesthetics, can have affects on you as you mobilize them and sweat them out. (If you’re like most people and you think back to all the drugs you’ve taken, and any operations you might have had, you’ll recognize that you’ve been exposed to a lot of drugs over the course of time!) Depending on the drug, this can be one of the dangers of the infrared sauna. This is why we believe that no one should attempt to do a systematic sauna detoxification program on their own without really studying up on the topic…and following an expert’s protocol exactly.

4. **Chemically sensitive people are more at risk.** If you are chemically sensitive, the dangers of the infrared sauna related to toxins released from the tissues by heat will be far greater for you. You’d be best to detoxify under expert supervision.

William Rea, MD, one of the most knowledgeable doctors in the world in environmental toxicity and sauna detoxification warns: “Uncontrolled, too-rapid mobilization can have devastating effects on chemically sensitive patients.” On the other hand, chemically sensitive people can and do get rid of their toxic burdens through carefully supervised sauna programs.