

Potential Benefits of Using a Sauna



Improves sleep



Enhances immune function



Detoxifies



Reduces stress



Slows signs of aging



Lowers risk of heart problems

What is a sauna?

[Saunas](#) are usually small rooms, often lined with unpainted wood.

Traditional [Finnish saunas](#)[Trusted Source](#) use heated rocks to increase the temperature in the room. In a dry sauna, the room's temperature reaches up to 195°F (90.5°C) with very low humidity.

Water may be poured over the hot rocks to create moist, humid heat. This type generally operates at lower temperatures, usually around 110°F to 120°F (43°C to 49°C) and 100% relative humidity.

Using a sauna may help relieve aches and pains, support relaxation, and improve cardiovascular health, among other benefits.

For thousands of years, people of many cultures have been using saunas believing in the benefits of heat to purify, cleanse, and heal the body. Individuals who regularly enjoy sauna bathing report that it helps them relax and improves their health.

Current research about the benefits of sauna bathing is mixed. Some benefits are well documented, while others require more research to support them.

If you have a chronic health condition, speak with your doctor before starting to sauna. It's always a good idea to check with a healthcare professional before beginning a new health routine.

The benefits of saunas

When you're in a sauna, you get hot, and you sweat. As your core temperature rises, [you may experience Trusted Source](#) an increased skin temperature, elevated pulse rate, and dilated blood vessels. This happens as your heart begins to pump more blood, and you also begin to sweat.

Here are a few health benefits individuals report from using the sauna:

Relaxation

Saunas have traditionally been used to help people feel calm and to relax muscles. As your heart rate goes up and your blood vessels dilate, blood flow to the skin increases, which may cause some people to feel relaxed.

Your [sympathetic nervous system](#) becomes more active to maintain a temperature balance in your body. Your endocrine glands begin to get involved in this response. Your body's reaction to heat may lead to positive feelings.

In some countries like Finland, using the sauna is also a social experience. A Finnish [population-based self-report study](#) suggested that the shared nature of the sauna was partially responsible for positive feelings reported by people who routinely used it.

Pain relief

[Some studies Trusted Source](#) suggest that people who have used a sauna report a reduction in pain. In a sauna, blood vessels relax and dilate, blood flow increases, and the experience can help reduce tension in the joints and relieve sore muscles. This may contribute to pain relief.

Saunas may also [help reduce Trusted Source](#) chronic pain. One [2019 study Trusted Source](#) found that saunas helped ease [lower back pain](#). While all participants in that study reported some benefits, the improvements were not found to be statistically significant. The authors recommend that people with these conditions undergo a couple of trial sessions to see whether sauna use improves their symptoms before incorporating it as part of their treatment routine.

Improved blood circulation

Some people report improved circulation and cardiovascular health from using a sauna.

In a [2022 case-control study, Trusted Source](#) sedentary adults were randomly assigned to an exercise group or a group with exercise and a sauna. The group-assigned exercise combined with sauna bathing improved cardiorespiratory fitness, decreased systolic blood pressure, and lowered total cholesterol levels. The researchers suggest that more investigation is needed to help determine how often an individual might need to have a sauna to see these benefits.

Since the research was combined with exercise, it's difficult to know how much of the benefit is due to the increased exercise and how much may be attributed to the sauna exposure.

After your sauna session, drink plenty of water to rehydrate your body.

Precautions when using a sauna

There are things to consider when you use a sauna. Speak with your healthcare professional before beginning a sauna routine, especially if you have any chronic health conditions.

Dehydration

Be sure to drink plenty of water before and after using a sauna. Do not spend long periods of time in the sauna, as prolonged periods increase your risk of [dehydration](#).

Severe dehydration is a medical emergency. You should leave the sauna immediately if you:

- feel dizzy or lightheaded
- have a headache
- get very thirsty

Toxins

The liver and kidneys are the primary organs responsible for removing toxins from the body. But some research has demonstrated that sweating during a sauna session may release toxins from the body or skin.

A [2019 research review](#)[Trusted Source](#) found that sweat contains some toxins. However, this same review noted that sweating in a sauna is not an effective way to “detoxify.” However, in some cultures, sweating has long been [recommended](#)[Trusted Source](#) as a detoxification remedy. For example, traditional Persian medicine has long recommended [sweating for detoxification](#)[Trusted Source](#), but more research is needed.

Proper hydration is important for your liver and kidneys to function properly. This is another reason to be sure you're well-hydrated before, during, and after a sauna session.

Fertility

Research has found an association between sauna use and loss of fertility in men. A [2018 study](#)^{Trusted Source} of Finnish men who had two 15-minute sauna sessions per week for 3 months found that the use of saunas had a significant negative effect on their production of sperm.

However, the effect was found to be reversible. More research is needed to understand the effect of saunas on fertility, especially in men who already have low sperm counts or other issues with fertility.

Who should not use a sauna?

People with certain health conditions are advised not to use a sauna or steam room. Be sure to check with a doctor before using a sauna if you have any of the following conditions:

- [pregnancy](#)
- [asthma](#) or other breathing conditions
- [heart disease](#)
- [epilepsy](#)
- very high or very low blood pressure
- people under the influence of alcohol
- those taking stimulants, tranquilizers, or other mind-altering drugs

- While many people report many health benefits of using a sauna, there's evidence to suggest that these include relaxation, minor pain relief, and improved cardiovascular health.
- Saunas may help when used in combination with a balanced diet, regular physical activity, and plenty of water.
- Always consult with your healthcare professional before starting a sauna routine. If you feel dizzy, unwell, or develop a headache while in a sauna, leave immediately and cool down. Make sure to rehydrate with a couple of glasses of water after using a sauna.