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Far infrared sauna therapy:
**An Easy Way to Keep You
and Your Family Healthy**

The hectic pace of today's 24-hour lifestyle may be detrimental to your health and cause damage to your overall quality of life. Committing to some stress-relieving activities is therefore a must to help you chill out and relax.

While there are many activities that you may include into your list, the far infrared (FIR) sauna – an evidence-based sauna – is one of the easiest activities you can consider to rejuvenate yourself after a hard day at work.

The FIR sauna is a small, movable and heated cabin, in which you can sit inside to enjoy the gentle FIR radiant heat that penetrates at a depth of 1.5 inches into your body. This gentle heat warms your body and causes you to sweat.

Compared with traditional saunas, the amount of sweat produced in an FIR sauna is two to three times higher; this allows more toxins to be released from the body. You can also calm yourself by doing other pleasurable activities, such as reading and listening to music, while enjoying the benefits of FIR in the sauna room. Regular FIR sauna therapy, when combined with a healthy diet and regular exercise, can help you improve or sustain wellness and make you look and feel younger.

Unless otherwise advised by your doctor, the FIR sauna is generally well tolerated and beneficial for people with different needs, including those who want to lose weight, improve general well-being, and keep skin healthy and radiant-looking.

The following interviews reveal the effects of FIR sauna therapy on your cardiovascular system and skin from the medical experts' point of view, as well as what the current users have to say about the FIR sauna.

Improving Your Cardiovascular Health with FIR Sauna Therapy

Datuk Dr Aizai Azan Abdul Rahim

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Sauna therapy is popular in the northern countries, especially in Japan, but it has also started to gain popularity in Malaysia recently. There are many different types of sauna. The FIR sauna is the newer type that uses FIR heater and produces effects at a lower temperature (60°C) than the traditional sauna.

The FIR sauna has been associated with various benefits, such as weight reduction, detoxification, improvement in breathing in people diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and improvement in rheumatic diseases.^{1,2} More interestingly, some studies suggested that the FIR sauna may be beneficial for the heart through several mechanisms. These include:

- **Improving the strength of the heart:** The effects of sauna therapy on the heart are similar to that of exercise. The increasing temperature during sauna therapy causes the heart to pump harder, which then increases the cardiac output and subsequently, improves the strength of the heart. A study has shown that regular FIR sauna therapy for 4 weeks (five times a week) improved the pumping of the heart (ejection fraction) and reduced the size of the left ventricle of the heart among patients with mild heart failure.²
- **Reducing blood pressure (BP):** Sauna therapy induces sweating and causes an increased blood flow to the skin due to vasodilatation (relaxation of the blood vessels). As a result, BP is reduced. Regular sauna therapy (twice a week for 3 months) was found to lower BP,² thus suggesting its benefit in hypertensive patients.
- **Preventing atherosclerosis:** FIR sauna therapy may be beneficial for people who have mild heart failure by improving the function of the endothelium (ie, lining of the blood vessels that is important for the control of constriction and relaxation of the blood vessels).^{3,4} A study reported that repeated FIR sauna bathing improved endothelial function in patients with risk factors of heart disease (ie, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, smoking, and high cholesterol), thereby suggesting a preventive role of FIR sauna therapy in atherosclerosis.⁵

The optimum duration of sauna therapy is uncertain, but it is presumed that the associated benefits increase with increasing frequency and duration (**Figure 1**).⁶ Nevertheless, the frequency and duration should be adjusted accordingly to allow the body to get used to the sauna.

The FIR sauna is generally safe for all people; however, it should be avoided after alcohol intake or if one is on certain medications to avoid over-absorption of these drugs. For those who have heart conditions, such as low BP, ongoing chest pain, severely narrowed

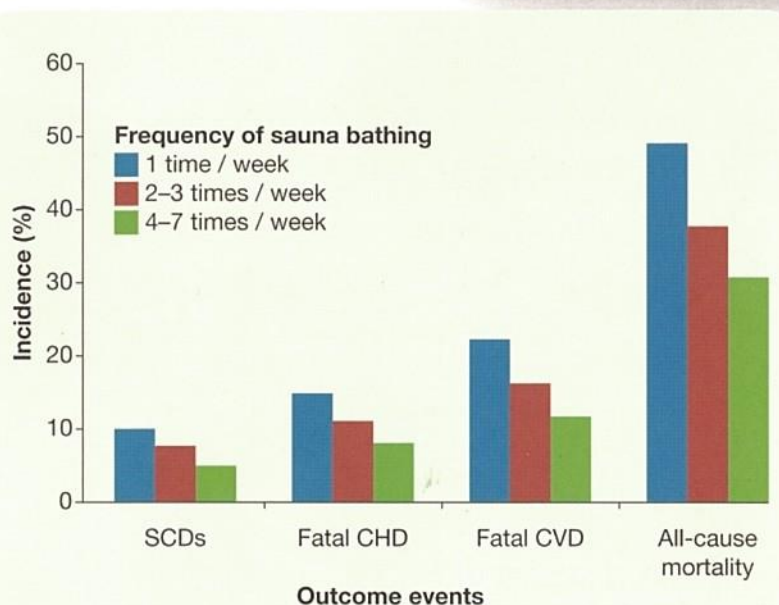


Figure 1: Increased frequency of sauna bathing is associated with a reduced risk of SCD, fatal CHD, fatal CVD, and all-cause mortality*

(SCDs: Sudden cardiac deaths; CHD: Coronary heart disease; CVD: Cardiovascular disease)

*All-cause mortality is defined as death from any cause. Reduction in all-cause mortality means improvement in survival rate

valve, recent heart attack, unstable or untreated heart failure, chronic heart failure, irregular heartbeat, and recent stroke,^{2,6} a healthcare professional should be consulted before sauna therapy is started.

Conclusion

Various small studies have demonstrated that regular, long-term FIR sauna therapy does have some benefits on lifestyle diseases, including obesity and hypertension. In addition, FIR sauna therapy is safe for people who do not have any contraindication. Larger studies should be done in the future to determine the significant benefits of FIR sauna therapy.

Regaining Your Healthy Skin and Wellness with FIR Sauna Therapy

Dr Nazirin Ariffin

Consultant Dermatologist, Nazirin Skin Centre

Maintaining a healthy skin is essential as the skin is the most important organ that protects the body. A healthy skin can be achieved through many ways, which include practising good skin hygiene, reducing exposure to sun, preventing dehydration, eating healthily (ie, consuming food that are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin A, and vitamin C) and exercising regularly.

Apart from that, emerging evidence suggests that regular FIR sauna therapy may also be beneficial for the skin. The heat emitted by the FIR heater is able to promote skin healing and stimulate collagen production. A study published in the *Journal of Cosmetic and Laser Therapy* showed that regular FIR sauna therapy (three times a week for 12 weeks) improved overall skin texture by reducing wrinkles, improving overall skin tone, as well as increasing the softness, smoothness, elasticity and clarity of the skin.⁷

The increase in core body temperature during FIR sauna therapy signals the body to sweat to prevent overheating of the body. Sweating unclogs pores and induces the production of dermcidin – a natural antimicrobial peptide that can reduce the viable bacteria on the skin surface, thus lowering the risk of skin infections.⁸ In addition to promoting a healthy skin, FIR sauna therapy is also associated with the following benefits:

- **Detoxifies the body:** Sweating during sauna therapy removes unwanted elements (including excess salt and cholesterol) from the body. It was found that sweating induced by FIR sauna removes more toxins from the body than sweating induced by traditional sauna (15–20% versus 1–3%).⁹
- **Burns calories for weight loss:** A 30-minute sauna session was found to burn up to 600 calories, which is

equivalent to 5–6 miles of running.¹⁰ Sauna therapy was also shown to reduce weight¹ and waist circumference.¹¹

- **Relieves joint and muscle pain:** Due to the deep penetration of the FIR heat into the joints, muscle and tissues, FIR sauna was also found to be able to relieve joint and muscle pain in people who have sports injuries, arthritis and other chronic pain. It increases the flow of blood, nutrients and oxygen into the injured areas, thereby reducing soreness and soothing muscle spasm, leaving the body to heal naturally. A recent study reported a 70% reduction in pain levels in patients who have chronic pain after their first session of FIR sauna therapy. The pain score remained low throughout the observation period.¹²

FIR sauna is generally beneficial for most people, including people who want to improve general well-being and lose weight, people who are unable to lose weight through exercise due to certain medical conditions, and people who have chronic joint pain or muscle pain.

Conclusion

The FIR sauna is one of the safer and effective approaches in maintaining healthy skin and general well-being.

Testimonial 1:

“The FIR Sauna makes my skin looks younger, smoother, and more radiant”

WaiKuan Lee User of Sonne Sauna, an entrepreneur, female

“I owned a Sonne FIR Sauna unit at home, and I have been using it regularly for 3 years (three to five times a week at 52°C), often at night before I go to bed. I really enjoy the feeling of sweating induced by the FIR Sauna, and I spend my time reading books and listening to music during the 30-minute session. I found that this is the best way to pamper myself while living a hectic lifestyle. Combining regular sauna therapy with a balanced diet and exercise not only keeps me at a healthy weight, but also has improved my skin health. I have always received compliments from my friends that my skin texture has improved ever since I started using the FIR Sauna. My skin looks younger, smoother, and more radiant. Sometimes, my job requires me to stand for long periods of time, and this is when the sauna also plays a role in relieving the soreness of my legs. The FIR Sauna has improved my overall general well-being by making me feel healthier and more energetic. Under my influence, my husband also started using the FIR Sauna and I have observed significant weight loss in him. In summary, the FIR Sauna brings many advantages and I would recommend its usage to my friends and other family members.”



Testimonial 2:

“The FIR Sauna relaxes my body and mind, and improves my overall health condition”

Law Kian Kok User of Sonne Sauna, 58 years old, male



“After knowing the health benefits associated with sauna bathing, I decided to purchase a unit of the Sonne FIR Sauna so that my whole family can enjoy these benefits. I use the FIR Sauna once or twice weekly for 30–35 minutes per session at 53–55°C. My experience with the FIR Sauna is almost 1 year now, and I have noticed improvement in my overall health condition. I love listening to music during the sauna session, as this relaxes my body and mind. Besides, the scent of the wood material that makes up the sauna unit – the Canadian Red Cedar – also has a calming effect on me. The other thing I like about the FIR Sauna is that, it induces sweating and opens up my skin pores to help detoxify my body. I feel more energetic after every sauna session and sleep better at night. I think that sauna therapy may be a good alternative for people who are unable to spare time to exercise due to busy schedules. I will continue using the FIR Sauna and recommend it to more of my friends.”

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