

## The value of infra-red saunas in detoxification

A lot is talked about toxins these days; largely glyphosate<sup>1</sup>, moulds and heavy metals which compromise the immune system, causing a lot of the symptoms that are synonymous with chronic illness (and, CFS in particular): dizziness, cold hands and feet, brain fog, etc. you may wonder why the body can't detoxify itself, which of course it can if it is healthy and unburdened. But with the increases in toxicity in our environment (inside as well as outside<sup>2</sup>), our bodies are increasingly struggling. In recent times, we have heard a lot about chelation therapy (pronounced 'key-lation), which aims to enhance the detoxification of the body by binding to heavy metals and transporting them out the body via the organs of detoxification: liver, kidneys, lungs and skin. Chlorella is one such chelator or binder and Drs. Pompa and Mercola in the US promote their own range of products, as do several UK suppliers<sup>3</sup>. We know that these work but they are very expensive and they mean you have to take a lot of pills which may be difficult if you are already taking medications or supplements. So, what are the alternatives?

One that I think is not so commonly known is the **far infra-red (FIR) sauna** which is particularly good way of detoxing for slow metabolisers (people whose detox channels may already be compromised or whose enzyme systems are genetically less active). Compared to a traditional sauna which operates at around 80-90 °C, infrared saunas are *low heat saunas* that operate at 40-50°C by emitting an IR frequency of 9.4microns<sup>4</sup>. Which, if you're anything like me and find it difficult to tolerate the heat and steam of a traditional sauna, is a considerable advantage. According to the journal Scientific American, the difference is "instead of heating the air with a powerful heating element, infrared saunas use infrared radiation to heat the body directly", which is more efficient and uses much less energy than a traditional sauna. In an infrared sauna, the IR radiation emitted from ceramic plates penetrates the outer two inches of your body, where it is converted into heat energy stimulating blood and lymphatic flow stimulating the sweat glands. Since the air in an IR sauna does not feel hot, like in a traditional sauna, there is no shock to the cardiovascular system; you feel comfortable warmth as opposed to the intense, burning heat of a traditional sauna, and you sweat without effort<sup>5</sup>. You can actually start sweating before you feel warm (I can corroborate this – my experience is that the sweating begins almost immediately – although this ability is variable and depends on how much toxic load you have – if very toxic, your skin takes a while to adjust). Having a steam sauna first may stimulate this, if you're doing it in a traditional spa.

### Weight loss and detoxification

For people who can't tolerate the high heat of a traditional sauna long enough to break into a significant sweat, infrared saunas will be a revelation. Because of their ability to detoxify fat cells, they will also help in weight loss. According to Dr Keesha, a US based therapist, "many people who have unsuccessfully tried many diets often find success with a far infrared sauna because they are able to eliminate chemicals stored in the fat cells. This makes safe weight loss much easier". Since sweat is a major route of elimination, the IR sauna detoxifies the body by enhancing sweating, particularly oil sweat<sup>6</sup>. The IR sauna also stimulates lipolysis (breakdown of fat). Heavy metals are stored in our fat tissue. Gradual fat

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<sup>1</sup> A pesticide present in most foods which produced leaky gut and compromises immunity

<sup>2</sup> Indeed because of artificial scents, household products and stain-repellents which off-gas, homes can be more toxic than the outside environment!

<sup>3</sup> [www.cytoplan.co.uk/detox-support](http://www.cytoplan.co.uk/detox-support)

<sup>4</sup> Which is roughly the same as the body's natural IR frequency

<sup>5</sup> Not everyone sweats at first – this is a result of their channels of elimination in the cells being blocked

<sup>6</sup> There are in fact two types of sweat: oil and water sweat. Oil sweats happen when not so hot and are better for detoxification.

breakdown releases them to the circulatory system for excretion by the liver, kidneys, or sweat, depending on which metabolic processes each specific toxin requires. Sauna therapy is not just for detoxification however. There are many articles on PubMed of studies on its clinical application in pain management and cardiovascular disease\*.

### Pain Relief for chronic pain conditions e.g. Fibromyalgia

IR sauna is particularly helpful in breaking the cycle of muscle tension, ischaemia (lack of oxygen in the tissues) and pain. When muscles get tense they restrict blood flow which can induce spasm and thus pain. Heating the tissues breaks the cycle by encouraging blood flow due to vasodilation (enlargement of the blood vessels). This works well for both acute and chronic pain. IR saunas are best within 24- 48 hours of an acute injury such as muscle/ligament sprains and strains. But interestingly, they are also helpful for more long-term chronic or persistent pain conditions like fibromyalgia, low back pain, etc.

The pain of fibromyalgia is typically felt in the postural muscles of the neck, back, shoulders and sometimes the hands, but can be more widespread. According to the old medical definition, a diagnosis of fibromyalgia requires a patient to have experienced widespread pain for a minimum of three months in 11 of 18 tender muscle sites called 'tender points'. Among those 18 sites are the hips, knees and rib cage. Most sufferers of fibromyalgia are women of childbearing age, but it has also been known to affect men, children and the elderly.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is a sister syndrome to Fibromyalgia, with many of the same symptoms, but it's major symptom being fatigue rather than pain. It is often characterized by a deficiency of essential vitamins and minerals which prevents proper assimilation of nutrients and therefore detoxification of by-products of metabolism and external toxins (which require certain nutrients). So, it is a cycle of reducing vitality, as the body gets more and more toxic and deficient. Often, the end result is an excessive accumulation of mercury and other toxic heavy metals in various organs of the body. These toxic metals are found in increasing amounts in our environment, personal care products and in dental amalgams. Toxic metals are absorbed and replace vital elements like Selenium or Iodine when there is a deficiency of essential minerals. The metabolic functioning of the cellular energy factories, **mitochondria**, become heavily compromised and effectively begin to shut down. This is known as the **Cell Danger Response** and is covered in my book *'The Scar that Won't Heal'* in more detail<sup>i</sup>.

By boosting the parasympathetic (rest and digest) arm of your autonomic nervous system, it can help to relieve many stress-related illnesses such as: Fibromyalgia/CFS/Lyme disease/ Rheumatoid arthritis/Lupus, etc

Symptoms of other chronic illnesses that are helped:

- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Joint Pain
- Headaches
- Depression
- Carpal Tunnel RSI
- Dizziness
- Anxiety
- Irritable Bowel

## How much and how often

There are so many different opinions on this but it is generally regarded as something you do regularly i.e. every week at least. It is far better to do little and often than one big session. If you can afford your own sauna then 20 mins – half an hour every few days (or every day for people with health issues) is a good idea. But as I've learned (see below), it is better to start slowly and work up to this.

## Suppliers and Costs

For those who don't have an IR sauna facility nearby (these are increasing all the time – check your local spas and health centres), you may wish to consider purchasing one of your own. If you are concerned that saunas cost a lot then you should be pleasantly surprised. You can buy the portable (collapsible material) type for just over £180. To buy a more permanent wooden structure will cost more (starting at around £3500), but you can get good second hand ones for around £1000. Obviously, it depends on size and quality<sup>7</sup>. Running costs are also surprisingly low as the ceramic heating element is around 1400W. Increasingly, you can now buy small blankets and wrist and waist bands which apply FIR in specific areas. I highly recommend these for a beginner to FIR.

## Concerns

A few caveats; firstly *more is not necessarily better*. According to Dr Brian Clement, head of the world-famous Hippocrates Institute<sup>ii</sup>, “if you've never taken a sauna before, you only want to spend a few minutes in there—about four minutes tops. Then, for each subsequent sauna, add about 30 seconds, and slowly work your way up to somewhere between 15 to 30 minutes”. What can happen if you overdo it is that you will overwhelm your detoxification mechanisms and become quite unwell. This happened to me when I had my first sauna in a spa – because I'd paid to be there for the day I thought I'd make the most of it. I came away feeling great – I'd spent probably around 2 hours in there, altogether. But the next day my fibroid was painfully enlarged and I felt very sluggish due to lymph blockage. (Fibroids are another sign of toxicity – usually heavy metals – stored in the fatty tissue of the uterine fibroid). It took me nearly a week to get back to normal.

Also, be aware that a lot of sauna manufacturer's claims are unfounded- the idea that you sweat 20% toxins has not been proven and is a bit unlikely. It does certainly enhance fat soluble toxin removal from your body – apart from heavy metals that includes pesticides, PCB's, POP's (persistent organic pollutants), *and* some minerals like calcium – but usually it will be the non-natural forms added to foods rather than natural calcium which means it is not a problem. However, you should always replenish your body afterward a sauna. According to mercola.com, “the three electrolytes that you need to take when you're taking saunas are: calcium, magnesium, and potassium. These should be whole food ionic forms.”<sup>8</sup> Chemical supplements like those sold in supermarkets are often made of petrochemicals and non-assimilable forms – try the wholefood varieties instead like chlorella, kelp, raw cacao, maca, etc<sup>iii</sup>. Mineral water can also be beneficial, especially those containing electrolytes e.g, Evian, as can spraying with Magnesium oil (hydrolysed spray version absorbed by the skin – better than supplements if your gut is compromised).

You can also boost the detox effect by getting a massage just after the sauna. In my practice I have a FIR heated blanket under the massage couch and a portable sauna that people can have a look at prior to

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<sup>7</sup>In the UK, check out FIRzone for the portable type and Clearlight (Europe, US and Aus) for the more permanent wooden structures -they are very low EMF so safe and well-made.

<sup>8</sup> like Elete, concentrated Utah rock salt solution, available online

buying one for themselves. Be aware that, particularly if you are ill, it is not a good idea to share a sauna – this can be a problem in spas where they are not cleaned regularly enough. If someone's sweat is in there, make sure you sit on towels and wipe down afterwards (and shower of course). If you do have a massage, make sure you don't go for the sometimes heavily perfumed/ chemical products made by the big spa companies to entice you. I use only natural massage wax in my clinic, made with natural essential oils and usually magnesium spray as it adds a lovely muscle relaxant effect. This is particularly valuable for my chronic pain clients whose muscles are often in spasm.

Please also note that the sauna will not necessarily replace a full detoxification protocol if you are unwell with CFS/ME (or other chronic disease), which represents a high level of toxicity. You should consult a nutritional therapist in conjunction with your sauna use in order to maintain a controlled detoxification process AND look at your stress issues with a body-oriented psychotherapist (like myself). Better still, consult a qualified Chrysalis Effect Practitioner or similar who deals with all these issues together.

And of course, sauna use is not a panacea if you are continually re-toxing with poor food, stress and chemicals. All three environmental toxicity sources will need to be tackled for longterm healing.

See also [www.infraredsauna.co.uk/](http://www.infraredsauna.co.uk/) for much more information. It has a wealth of info.

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<sup>i</sup> My first book 'The Scar that Won't Heal' available on amazon here. [https://www.amazon.co.uk/Scar-that-wont-Heal-Unresolved/dp/1517558921/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Scar-that-wont-Heal-Unresolved/dp/1517558921/ref=sr_1_1?) deals with stress and the body. For more info on natural medicine, see my second and third books: The World Within and 'Losing our minds'. Search the title or my name.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2012/03/21/dr-clement-on-detoxification.aspx>

<sup>iii</sup> Cytoplan.co.uk do a good range and are an ethical, not for profit company which I use. Ask me for more details if you are interested in ordering as clients of mine get a discount.