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The Health Benefits of Saunas

"Don't sweat the small stuff." Whoever coined that phrase never enjoyed the health benefits of saunas—not to mention the sense of renewal and relaxation they evoke.

A widely popular indulgence throughout the world, an infrared sauna is a small room or building kept at a temperature above 80 degrees. Designed to promote sweating as a means of cleansing and refreshing the body, saunas were originally prevalent in gyms or spas, but recent years have seen a proliferation of freestanding versions installed in homes for private use. Why the recent surge in popularity? Many sauna enthusiasts and doctors have heralded the abundance of health benefits of saunas.

Stress Busting

Perhaps the most obvious and immediate benefit is the sense of calm that comes with prolonged exposure to therapeutic heat. In today's fast-paced, hectic lifestyles, unprecedented levels of stress have the potential to weaken our immune systems, making us more vulnerable to illnesses and disease. Regular sauna sessions can help to reduce these high stress levels, contributing to an overall enhanced sense of health and a greater resistance to sickness. Among the many benefits of sweating is also the release of bodily heat, which helps to regulate our core temperature.

The Healing Touch

Infrared saunas are often used as doctor-recommended therapeutic treatments for physical ailments. Sufferers of such respiratory conditions as asthma and bronchitis have found the dry heat of saunas to provide a measure of health relief, helping them achieve more regular breathing patterns. People with chronic pains brought about by arthritis, joint stiffness, muscle spasms, or injured backs have reported such beneficial results as minimized soreness and increased mobility with regular sauna sessions.

Heart-Healthy Benefits

Another key health benefit of saunas is lowered blood pressure, which can benefit those who suffer from chronically high levels. The heat from a sauna causes the dilation of the capillaries, which effectively reduces blood pressure. (It should be noted that sauna usage shouldn't replace a doctor's treatment for high blood pressure, but can serve as a beneficial supplement.) Infrared saunas have even been linked to lower cholesterol levels.

Let Them See You Sweat

Many athletes have long been devoted advocates of infrared saunas. Regular exposure to monitored heat levels has been linked to enhanced physical performance, higher endurance levels, and an increased threshold for

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anaerobic exercise. For fitness enthusiasts, infrared saunas can be beneficial when used as a supplement for regular fitness routines as a means of burning extra calories (up to 500 in a full session), eliminating more fat cells, and boosting overall metabolism. Sweating also increases blood circulation throughout the body. Although they should not be used as a substitute for cardiovascular exercise, the health benefits of saunas make them advantageous as a follow-up component of a regular workout regimen.

Basic Purification

With the pollutants that come with today's levels of industry and transportation, the average person is likely host to many toxic substances, including trace metals and harmful chemicals. The act of sweating can help to flush those toxins from the body. The skin, the largest organ of the human body, contains more than 2.6 million sweat glands. It's widely believed that infrared sauna usage helps to flush toxins from the body through the pores of our skin.

Get Glowing

Those with skin problems, such as acne, psoriasis, and eczema, have reported that regular exposure to the heat of an infrared sauna has improved their pre-existing conditions, helping them to achieve clear, healthy skin with a radiant glow. Some have even reported less prominence of scar tissue after regular sessions.

Whether your motivation for using an infrared sauna is to achieve improved well-being, boost fitness levels, or just to relax after a long, hard day, you're sure to step out feeling refreshed, rejuvenated, and better equipped to handle the demands and stresses of everyday life. Although they should not be used as a replacement to medical treatments, the many health benefits of saunas reinforce their appeal.