

Frequent sauna bathing protects men against dementia

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Frequent sauna bathing can reduce the risk of dementia, according to a recent study carried out at the University of Eastern Finland. In a 20-year follow-up, men taking a sauna four to seven times a week were

66 percent less likely to be diagnosed with dementia than those taking a sauna once a week. The association between sauna bathing and dementia risk has not been previously investigated.

The effects of sauna bathing on the risk of Alzheimer's [disease](#) and other forms of [dementia](#) were studied in the Kuopio Ischaemic Heart Disease Risk Factor Study (KIHD), involving more than 2,000 middle-aged men living in the eastern part of Finland. Based on their sauna-bathing habits, the study participants were divided into three groups: those taking a sauna once a week, those taking a sauna 2-3 times a week, and those taking a sauna 4-7 times a week.

The more frequently saunas were taken, the lower was the risk of dementia. Among those taking a sauna four to seven times a week, the risk of any form of dementia was 66 percent lower and the risk of Alzheimer's disease 65 percent lower than among those taking a sauna just once a week. The findings were published recently in the *Age and Ageing* journal.

Previous results from the KIHD study have shown that frequent sauna bathing also significantly reduces the risk of [sudden cardiac death](#), the risk of death due to [coronary artery disease](#) and other cardiac events, as well as overall mortality. According to Professor Jari Laukkanen, the study leader, sauna bathing may protect both the heart and memory to some extent via similar, still poorly known mechanisms. "However, it is known that cardiovascular health affects the brain as well. The sense of well-being and relaxation experienced during sauna bathing may also play a role."

More information: Sauna bathing is inversely associated with dementia and Alzheimer's disease in middle-aged Finnish men. *Age and Ageing* 2016; 0: 1-5. [DOI: 10.1093/ageing/afw212](https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afw212)

Provided by University of Eastern Finland

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