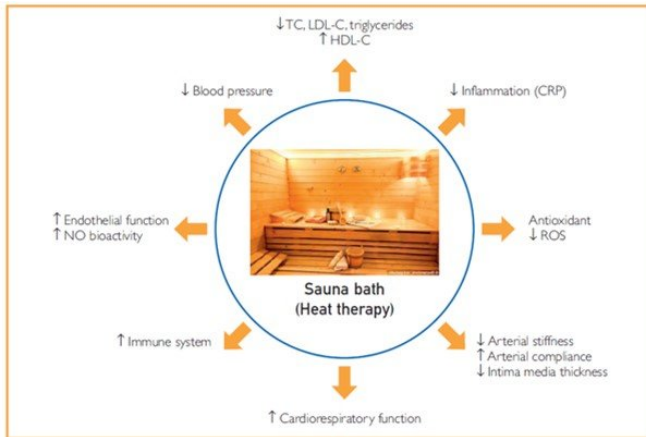


# Frequent sauna bathing has many health benefits, new literature review finds

1 August 2018



Pleiotropic effects (proposed mechanistic pathways) of Finnish sauna baths. CRP = C-reactive protein; HDL-C = high-density lipoprotein cholesterol; LDL-C = low-density lipoprotein cholesterol; NO = nitric oxide; ROS = reactive oxygen species; TC = total cholesterol. Credit: Mayo Clinic Proceedings

Sauna bathing is an activity used for the purposes of pleasure, wellness, and relaxation. Emerging evidence suggests that beyond its use for pleasure, sauna bathing may be linked to several health benefits. A new report published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* found that sauna bathing is associated with a reduction in the risk of vascular diseases, such as high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease, neurocognitive diseases, nonvascular conditions, such as pulmonary diseases, mental health disorders, and mortality. Furthermore, sauna bathing alleviated conditions such as skin diseases, arthritis, headache, and flu. The evidence also suggests that regular sauna baths are associated with a better health-related quality of life.

The research team led by scientists from the University of Jyväskylä, the University of Eastern Finland, and the University of Bristol conducted a

comprehensive literature review on the effects of Finnish sauna baths on health outcomes. Finnish sauna [bathing](#) is characterized by exposure to high environmental temperature (80 degrees C-100 degrees C) for a brief period.

Findings from this comprehensive literature review also suggest that the health benefits of sauna bathing are linked to the effects of sauna on circulatory, respiratory, cardiovascular, and immune functions. Regular sauna bathing stabilizes the autonomic nervous system, reduces blood pressure, inflammation, oxidative stress, circulation of bad cholesterol, arterial stiffness, and vascular resistance. Moreover, sauna bathing contributes to beneficial levels of circulating hormones and other cardiovascular markers. The physiological responses produced by an ordinary sauna bath correspond to those produced by moderate- or high-intensity [physical activity](#) such as walking.

The same research team has published several experimental studies demonstrating the beneficial effects of short-term sauna exposure on [blood pressure](#), specific cardiovascular biomarkers, inflammation, arterial compliance, and cardiovascular function. The feelings of relaxation and promotion of mental health and well-being associated with sauna sessions may be linked to the increased production of circulating levels of hormones such as endorphins, the research team reported. The review also reports that sauna bathing produces beneficial changes that are equivalent to those produced by physical activity. Indeed, the research team has shown in their previous studies that a combination of sauna bathing and physical activity might have added [health benefits](#) compared with each activity alone.

This review emphasized that sauna bathing has a good safety profile and can even be used in patients with stable [cardiovascular disease](#). Hot Finnish sauna baths have been shown to be hemodynamically well tolerated without the

occurrence of complex ventricular arrhythmias in patients with heart diseases.

**More information:** "Cardiovascular and Other Health Benefits of Sauna Bathing. A Review of the Evidence," *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* (2018). DOI: [10.1016/j.mayocp.2018.04.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mayocp.2018.04.008)

Provided by Elsevier

APA citation: Frequent sauna bathing has many health benefits, new literature review finds (2018, August 1) retrieved 18 November 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-08-frequent-sauna-health-benefits-literature.html>

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