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DESIGNER
HOTELS

5 FAST
FLORIDA
GETAWAYS

MEDICAL
WONDERS

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RUNNER**
A&E STAR
JORDAN
WALL

**FAR AWAY
COOKS
WORLD
CUISINE**

FASHION SWIMWEAR

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Hot Times

The wellness sweat heats up Delray Beach

Sophisticated Zen was the image that came to mind when I walked into Infrasweat in Delray Beach's Pineapple Grove. The accent wall was painted with Benjamin Moore's Strawberry Red. A large silver Buddha head from Z Gallerie hung above a white sofa. Then co-owner Kelly Dorsey entered the room dressed in Bohemian chic – blue jeans and long sweater with a print scarf tied around her head.

Dorsey got the idea for her business - saunas that deliver infrared heat directly to the body for weight loss and other wellness issues - on a trip to California. These private sauna rooms, popular in West Coast spas, have been featured on *The Oprah Show with Dr. Oz*, *The Doctors* and *Ellen*.

"You could easily find one at a spa, but I thought there has to be a better way," Dorsey said.

Her better way translated into a place where clients can get in and out in 30 to 45 minutes and not have to share a sauna cubicle. Infrasweat features six private rooms each with a Sunlighten sauna. If a heart rate monitor and special watch is purchased, the clients can wirelessly track heart rate, changes in weight and body mass index and calories burned. They can listen to music, select a color for chromotherapy and select from six programs – cardio, detoxification, pain relief, relaxation, weight loss and skin health. An introductory session is \$20; the next session is \$35 unless a membership package is purchased.

Infrared heaters provide radiant heat to warm the skin rather than the air. They heat from 120 to 150 degrees vs. 180 to 200 degrees in a traditional sauna. Clinical studies have shown the infrared saunas can reduce blood pressure, increase core body temperature and burn calories, Dorsey said.

Dr. Brent A. Bauer of the Mayo Clinic confirmed the saunas have some health benefits.

"Several studies have looked at using infrared saunas in the treatment of chronic health problems, such as high blood pressure, congestive heart failure and rheumatoid arthritis, and found some evidence of benefit," Dr. Bauer wrote on the clinic Website. "However, larger and more-rigorous studies are needed to confirm these results. On the other hand, no adverse effects have been reported with infrared saunas. So if you're considering trying a sauna for relaxation, an infrared sauna might be an option."

It should not be used by pregnant women, those with heart problems or by those who have insensitivity to heat. If you have any health issues, consult your doctor. Hydration with water, electrolyte drinks or coconut water is important before and after using the sauna.

"This is for anyone over 18, male or female, who wants to detox, relax or shed a few pounds," Dorsey said. "It is for people who are truly health or wellness oriented. It is not for a fast-food person."

—Charlyne Varkonyi Schaub

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