



Far Infrared Sauna Therapy

by David Steinman

The other day while taking a sauna, I realized just how happy I felt both during and after the session. Truth be told, whenever I take saunas, my mood always improves. I feel healthy, balanced, calm, and also purged of chemical toxins—that's all pretty darn good. And scientific studies support my observations: We do feel better about ourselves when we take far infrared saunas daily.

In the July-August 2005 issue of *Psychosomatic Medicine* (67[4]:643-7), researchers from Kagoshima University Hospital, Kagoshima City, Japan, published this interesting article: "Repeated thermal therapy diminishes appetite loss and subjective complaints in mildly depressed patients." They observed 28 mildly depressed in-patients with general fatigue, appetite loss, and somatic and mental complaints who were randomly assigned to far infrared sauna or non-sauna therapy. Patients in the far infrared therapy group were treated for 15 minutes and were then kept at bed rest with a blanket for 30 minutes once a day, 5 days a week for a total of 20 sessions in 4 weeks. Four weeks after admission, somatic complaints, hunger, and relaxation scores significantly improved, and mental complaints slightly improved in the far infrared therapy group compared with the non-sauna group.

"These findings suggest that repeated thermal therapy may be useful for mildly depressed patients with appetite loss and subjective complaints."

FAR INFRARED THERAPY AND SAD The benefits of light therapy for seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a type of winter depression that affects an estimated half a million people every winter between September and April, in particular from December through February, have been well described since the early 1980s when the disorder was first appreciated—and the use of light therapy is frequently preferred over antidepressant medication in complementary medicine and health approaches.

Because sunlight is composed of various wavelengths, and it is undetermined which of these wavelengths is the exact critical therapeutic factor for SAD, many clinical trials have compared bright white light with

the use of wavelengths that correspond to colored light, such as infrared, blue, and green.

A study performed in 1999 compared the use of bright-light therapy and infrared therapy for prophylactic treatment of SAD and showed a similar therapeutic response in both treatment groups. In mildly depressed patients, far infrared therapy alleviated patients' somatic complaints and appetite loss, and improved relaxation scores.

Says Rachel West, D.O., a member of the *Healthy Living* advisory board, "That's why in my practice I frequently recommend to my SAD patients that they install a beautiful Solocarbon™ far infrared sauna from Sunlight Saunas. (This is the kind in my own practice, and the best product today.)"

Indeed, Dr. West recognizes the multiple benefits of far infrared therapy. "When offered a choice of treatment for SAD, patients may want to choose Solocarbon for its many additional health benefits. Far infrared therapy has been shown to be very effective at removing both chemical and heavy metal toxins from the body as well as providing chronic pain and fibromyalgia relief, aiding weight loss, increasing circulation, reducing stress and fatigue, speeding wound healing, reducing swelling and inflammation, and alleviating joint stiffness."