



Turning up the Heat on Heart Health

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Healthy Living 13.1

With a failing economy, two wars, a healthcare crisis and many other pressing issues, our newly elected President Barack Obama has some high priority items to handle. Yet, amidst them all, he will take time to designate February 2009 as National Heart Month. And for good reason. Eighty million adults suffer from heart disease, stroke or some other form of cardiovascular disease (that's one in three American adults!). Although the President will be bringing much needed attention to this critical health issue, it's not all grim. The brighter news is that there are many lifestyle changes Americans can make to improve or maintain heart health. In addition to exercise and a healthy low-fat diet, one such way to support cardiovascular health is through regular use of a far infrared sauna. Yes, you read it correctly. Enjoying the relaxation of a far infrared sauna is good for your heart! It's also great for stress relief, detoxification, weight loss and just plain feeling good.

While you may be learning about the heart healthy benefits of regular far infrared sauna use for the first time, the world's medical and scientific literature have been reporting on these benefits for years.

A Japanese study published in the October, 2008 issue of the *Journal of Cardiology*, examined the clinical efficacy and safety of far infrared-ray dry sauna therapy compared to standard therapy for patients with chronic heart failure (CHF). A total of 188 patients with CHF were treated with standard therapy for at least one week and then were randomized to a far infrared sauna therapy group (112) or a control group (76) for an additional two weeks. The far infrared sauna therapy group was treated with sauna therapy for 15 minutes daily followed by 30 minutes of bed rest covered with a blanket. Specific heart health markers using chest radiography, echocardiography, and plasma levels of brain natriuretic peptide (BNP) that were measured before and after the 2 weeks revealed that both groups had cardiovascular improvements, but the improvements for the far infrared sauna therapy were significantly greater than for the control group. The researchers concluded that far infrared-ray dry sauna therapy is both safe and effective at improving clinical symptoms and cardiac function, and

decreasing cardiac size in CHF patients, calling it “an innovative and promising therapy for patients with CHF.”

It’s important to note that a far infrared sauna is different from a traditional hot rocks/steam sauna. The far infrared heat referred to in the study mentioned above is generated by far infrared light, part of the sun’s invisible light spectrum that can penetrate human tissue. It feels like sunbathing, yet it is completely healthy and safe because it does not cause the skin to burn. Far infrared light works by increasing the body’s core temperature which produces a much deeper, more detoxifying sweat. The traditional sauna heats the air with steam, which can be uncomfortably hot allowing for minimum exposure and only heats the surface of human tissue causing a superficial sweat. It’s also harder to breathe.

Anyone with risk factors for heart disease and who wishes to do everything possible to support their heart health should consider far infrared sauna therapy as part of their health program and should discuss it with their primary physician.