Find your kind of warmth

Your simple guide to traditional and infrared saunas

A sauna can create a welcoming space to slow down and enjoy warmth at home. This guide explains the differences between sauna types, what infrared wavelengths mean and what current research can reasonably tell us.

Two ways to enjoy a sauna

	Traditional sauna	Infrared sauna
How it works	A stove heats stones, air and surfaces, which warm your body.	Emitters direct radiant warmth towards your body, while also warming the cabin.
Typical air temperature	Around 70-100 degrees C.	Commonly around 40-60 degrees C.
The experience	Hot surrounding air and the familiar sauna ritual. Water can be added to stones where the heater instructions allow.	Direct warmth with a lower air temperature, which some people find more comfortable. Usually no water or steam.
May appeal if...	You enjoy a classic, hotter sauna experience.	You prefer a lower air temperature and direct radiant warmth.

Temperatures vary by model and setting. Both types can cause overheating; comfort and safe use matter more than the temperature display alone. [1, 2]

Infrared wavelengths, made simple

Infrared is invisible energy beyond the red end of visible light. It is different from ultraviolet (UV) light used for tanning. The bands below use the ICNIRP classification. [1]

Type	Wavelength	What happens in the skin
Near infrared (IR-A)	780-1,400 nm	Can reach further into skin than longer wavelengths, on the scale of millimetres.
Mid infrared (IR-B)	1,400-3,000 nm	Absorbed more superficially than near infrared.
Far infrared (IR-C)	3,000 nm-1 mm	Mainly absorbed at the skin surface. Your body then distributes the warmth.

nm means nanometres. 1,000 nm equals 1 micrometre. Wavelength terminology can differ between suppliers. Greater penetration does not automatically mean greater health benefits. [1]

What do carbon and full spectrum mean?

Carbon describes a heater material. Many carbon-panel heaters mainly produce far infrared. **Full spectrum** generally describes a sauna designed to provide near, mid and far infrared, sometimes using a combination of heater types. Ask us about the documented heater specifications for the model you are considering. [2]

More infrared bands do not, by themselves, prove better health results. Choose a sauna for its overall quality, comfort and suitability for your home, rather than wavelength promises alone.

Enjoy the warmth. Understand the evidence.

What benefits can you reasonably expect?

A space to unwind. A sauna offers time away from everyday distractions. How relaxed or comfortable you feel is personal, so trying the heat experience can help you choose.

Possible temporary relief from stiffness. A small infrared study of 34 people with inflammatory joint conditions found short-term improvements in pain and stiffness during sessions. Longer-lasting benefits were uncertain. This does not establish sauna as a treatment for arthritis. [3]

Encouraging cardiovascular research. A Finnish study of 2,315 middle-aged men linked more frequent traditional sauna use with better cardiovascular outcomes. It was observational, so it cannot prove that sauna caused the benefit. A separate 47-person trial found improvements in some cardiovascular measures when sauna was added to exercise over eight weeks. These findings do not guarantee individual results or establish the same effects for an infrared model. [4, 5]

No proven overall winner. Research has not established that infrared is healthier overall than traditional sauna, or that full spectrum offers better clinical outcomes than far infrared alone. Sauna is a wellbeing choice, not a substitute for exercise or medical care. [6]

Keep expectations realistic

The evidence reviewed does not justify promises of detoxification, heavy-metal removal, substantial fat loss, disease prevention or cures. Sweating and a raised heart rate are responses to heat; they are not proof of these benefits.

Use your sauna comfortably and safely

• Follow the instructions and time limits for your particular sauna. Begin with short, comfortable sessions and build up cautiously within those limits.

• Stay hydrated, avoid alcohol and leave immediately if you feel dizzy, nauseated, unusually weak or uncomfortable.

• Seek medical advice before use if you have a heart or blood-pressure condition, reduced heat sensation, or take medicines that affect heat tolerance.

• If pregnant, speak to your maternity team before use: overheating, dehydration and fainting are concerns. A lower-temperature infrared sauna is not automatically a safe alternative.

Safety guidance: [2, 7]. This guide provides general information and does not replace individual medical advice.

Let us help you choose

Tell us about the heat you enjoy, your available space and how you plan to use your sauna. We can explain the features and documented specifications of the options that suit you.

TheHottubWarehouse.co.uk

Evidence behind this guide

1. ICNIRP: Infrared radiation - bands and absorption. Read source
2. ICNIRP: Infrared warming cabins - heater types and safety. Read source
3. Oosterveld et al. (2009): Infrared sauna pilot study. Read source
4. Laukkanen et al. (2015): Finnish sauna observational study. Read source
5. Lee et al. (2022): Sauna and exercise randomised trial. Read source
6. Hussain & Cohen (2018): Systematic review of dry sauna studies. Read source
7. NHS practice guidance: Sauna use during pregnancy. Read source