



Dr. Robin A. Bernhoft, MD

FOR CHRONIC ILLNESS & ALLERGY

1200 Maricopa Hwy • Suite A • Ojai, CA 93023 • 2128 Pico Blvd • Santa Monica, CA 90405 • Tel 805-640-0180 • Fax 805-640-0181

Why Frequent Saunas Are Vitally Important To Recovery

By Robin A Bernhoft MD

We speak often about the important role total body burden of toxic chemicals and metals plays in causing disease. The CDC makes the case that virtually all chronic illness results from genetic susceptibility and modifiable environmental exposure. Toxins build up and exert their direct chemical effects on immunity, hormones, neurotransmitters and membrane function, producing chronic illness of all types.

The higher the body burden, the more likely a person is to develop disease. In order to regain health, we have to lower the body burden by getting toxic chemicals and/or metals out of the body.

Most of the toxins the body needs to get rid of are fat-soluble. The body stores these chemicals and metals in subcutaneous fat, and in fatty organs like the brain, kidneys, liver, endocrine glands, etc. Metals and many chemicals spend little time in the bloodstream, quickly depositing in fatty tissues. (That is why we prefer fat biopsy over blood levels for many chemicals, when we need documentation for legal purposes.) Presumably, the body “intends” to neutralize the effect of toxins by storing them out of the way in fat. However, many toxins tend to ooze slowly out of their storage sites back into the general circulation, interfering with normal function. (Think of your body as a giant time-release capsule.)

Sauna, and specifically infrared sauna, has proven effective in mobilizing toxic chemicals and metals. Mercury, for example, comes out 33 times faster through sauna-induced sweat than through urine, in the absence of an applied IV chelator.

Sauna works by heating up volatile toxic chemicals, which then either come out directly through the sweat, or indirectly through the breath (having been carried by the blood to the lungs). That is why one often smells foul odors coming out when in the sauna. When I was sick, and doing saunas 5 or 6 times a week for 30 to 45 minutes each time, I noticed truly nasty odors and odd colors of sweat coming out of me. As I have mentioned to many patients, I thought I was imagining things until I spent time at the Environmental Health Center, Dallas, where I witnessed other sauna patients putting out pastel-tinged sweat and odors of toluene and aviation fuel, as I had.

A person who is significantly ill needs to spend a lot of time in the sauna. While I was sick, I did saunas at least 5 times a week, 30 to 45 minutes each time. Now that I am basically normal, I still do saunas at least twice a week, and notice mild symptoms if I do not.

Many of our patients would benefit from spending more time in the sauna. It is my considered opinion that 3 or 4 times a week is a bare minimum for improvement, and 5 or 6 is better, 30 minutes minimum each time. Supplement with extra Magnesium and Potassium to replenish losses through sweat. We prescribe TrisSalts to replenish beneficial minerals that have been sweated out. Those of our patients who have used sauna at that level of intensity have regained normal life significantly faster than those who have not.