

The Sauna and Kids

Most kids can safely enjoy a brief sauna session. I remember going into the sauna as a kid with my parents at the community center or in a hotel sauna from time to time. I also remember getting out a lot sooner than they did because I was too hot!

Until puberty, kids can't regulate their body temperature through sweat production as efficiently as adults can. This means that children under twelve or so are more vulnerable to the [heat effects of saunas](#) .

For this and other reasons, kids do not follow the same guidelines of sauna use as their parents.

Let's look first at kids and sauna for recreational use, as in a family sauna.

Then below, we'll talk about sauna detox (come back soon for our upcoming sauna detox pages)and kids – a new and important tool in helping contaminated children eliminate toxic metals and chemicals from their bodies.

Kids and sauna use – things to know

- Number one danger of saunas for kids
- Infrared saunas and kids
- What Finnish families can teach us about introducing kids to the sauna

Number one danger of sauna for kids: burns!

(This is one of the great advantages of [far infrared \(fir\) saunas](#) - FIR saunas don't produce contact burns.)

A big problem – in fact the biggest problem for kids – in conventional saunas are contact burns. These happen when kids accidentally touch or fall on burning hot parts of the heater assembly.

When we were researching sauna safety for kids, we saw an alarming number of medical articles on kids and sauna burns!

Infrared saunas are constructed with grilles over [infrared heaters](#) and cannot produce this type of burn. In fact, no surface inside a properly designed infrared sauna gets hot enough to burn you by contact.

What Finnish families can teach us about introducing kids to the sauna

While saunas aren't a big part of family life in North America, they are in Finland! In fact, much of the health information available on sauna safety in general comes from Finland, where there is approximately 1 sauna for every 4 people!

In Finland, people use conventional, high-heat saunas regularly throughout their lives. Even infants are brought briefly (for a couple of minutes) into the sauna.

Small children and children up until around the age of eight are never allowed in the sauna alone. Finnish parents are experienced sauna-bathers, and watch their children during and after the sauna session to see how they react to the heat and its effects.

As one Finnish study concludes: "Finnish children ... tolerate the Finnish sauna bathing well...if the bathing time is appropriate to the individual child's ability to cope with the raised temperature."

It would seem by watching their child, the Finnish parent determines just how much bathing time their children can handle comfortably. But that's Finland!

North American families and the sauna

It is not recommended that babies or very young children use a sauna. Lawrence Wilson, MD, author of *Sauna Therapy for Detoxification and Healing* recommends avoiding sauna use for kids under the age of six. Sure, carrying a little one into a sauna with you for a few moments is fine, but small children and babies cannot express their needs specifically and cannot handle temperature extremes well.

Healthy older children and adolescents can use the sauna under supervision with an adult who is experienced in sauna use and safety. (Do you know [how to take a sauna](#), and what the relatively few [dangers of the infrared sauna](#) are?.)

How long a child can stay in the sauna depends on the child. But expert recommendations we've encountered suggest keeping the sauna session to 15 minutes or less. (Dr. Wilson says up to 20 minutes is okay).

A medical study: effects of 10 min. sauna use by children

There haven't been a whole lot of scientific studies on sauna and children to begin with. And you can count the ones done on children that were printed in English on one hand! (We are working on getting translations of the relevant Finnish and Czech studies.)

In a review article by Hannuksela and Ellahham entitled "[Benefits](#) and Risks of Sauna Bathing" that appeared in 2001 in *The American Journal of Medicine*, the authors state that sauna bathing is well tolerated by most healthy adults and children.

This review paper cites a study in which 81 children between the ages of 2-15 were administered various tests during and after a ten-minute long sauna at 70°C (158°F) (traditional sauna).

The results showed that all children tolerated their ten minutes well. Older children adapted to the heat better than younger ones. Interestingly, while all children maintained their blood pressure while in the sauna, a drop in blood pressure was noted immediately after completing the sauna (and two children fainting as a result).

Infrared saunas and kids

The research we reported above concerned conventional, high-temperature saunas. Because lower temperatures are involved in [fir saunas](#), kids can be expected to feel more comfortable in them than traditional saunas. Remember, though, that their internal temperature will still rise in an fir sauna, so don't have them stay in any longer than you would for a conventional sauna — at least until research specifically on fir saunas and kids is done.

Should the family get a 4 person sauna?

If you're going to bring your kids into the sauna with you from time to time, you might want to think about buying a larger infrared sauna such as a 4 person sauna. In a sauna you want to keep your sweat to yourself (don't forget that sweat contains toxins that the body is eliminating). There isn't room in a 2 person sauna for one or more little bodies to squeeze in with you without everyone touching (and dripping on) each other!

A 4 person sauna will be more expensive to run, though, amongst other considerations. Want to read more on the [4 person sauna](#)? We can help you compare it with the [2 person sauna](#).

Infrared sauna detoxification and kids

Can children safely undergo sauna detoxification (please come back for our upcoming pages on sauna detox for adults and kids)?

Although it took us a while to track down the answer to this one, the answer is, “Yes!”

As early as forty years ago, doctors have reported on sauna detox performed on children. One of the earliest reports came from the former Soviet Union and involved children that were poisoned with radioactive Cesium in the Chernobyl nuclear plant leak. Other studies have been reported from the U.S. in various medical journals and at the 1995 conference of the American Public Health Association. These studies were done on kids with known environmental contaminations.

While these programs all took place in conventional saunas (the only type in common use at the time), we expect that the results with infrared saunas will be just as good (and easier to tolerate). Please note that the sauna detoxification protocols used with the children in these studies were not the same as those recommended for adults. (Come back to learn what the protocol that was used for children was on our upcoming sauna detox for kids page).

In a conversation with the director of New York City-based non-profit sauna detox program for contaminated first-responders to 9/11, we learned that Narcanon is now testing the use of the infrared sauna for its programs. (Narcanon offers drug detox programs to the public through centers across the U.S.).

Is sauna detox in every child's future?

Okay, we have a prediction to make here:

Given the level of exposure to chemical and other toxins constantly rising in our society...

Given that we already know that all children are currently born with in-utero-acquired toxic chemicals in their bloodstreams and acquire more exposures daily...

And given that sauna detoxification is the only known way to safely reduce the internal load of many of these toxins...

Eventually sauna detoxification will become a necessary health practice for all.

[Move on from kids & sauna to benefits of the infrared sauna.](#)

<http://www.the-infrared-sauna-effect.com/sauna-kids.html>