



Deep relief

5 benefits of an infrared sauna in your practice.

BY DON TRALMER

AS AN INDUSTRY MARKETING TREND, CHIROPRACTORS ARE increasingly incorporating an infrared sauna into their practice to both enhance patient experience and create another income stream.

Far infrared radiant (FIR) heat is an energy that directly transmits and deeply penetrates into the body because of its specific wavelength. Basically, it replicates the rays of the sun's spectrum that are responsible for photosynthesis. In fact, Native Americans have long used this healing approach in sweat lodges.

NASA studies show infrared stimulation improves cardiovascular function and blood circulation in those who cannot exercise in a regular manner. As a measure of its safety, it is the same heat used in hospital

incubators for premature babies.

Far infrared should not be confused with the ultraviolet rays that cause sunburn and skin damage. "Far" in this case means the waves measure in the far range of the light spectrum, spanning from 3 to 100 micrometers, and so have no visible component. Ceramic heat emitters simulate the conversion of the energy of the sun into penetrating warmth that naturally heats the human body.

The array of health benefits derived from far infrared saunas stems from the type of heater used. There is a significant difference between ceramic heaters and commonplace carbon heaters (see sidebar). Ceramic infrared heaters were developed in Japan in 1965 by Tadashi Ishikawa and tested for 14 years before being patented and

used in the first clinical infrared thermal systems.

In the ceramic heater model, a small electrical coil is placed in a pure zirconium tube. Zirconium has strong chemical resistance, is mechanically strong, resists corrosion, and withstands high temperatures. This is why it has many applications in aerospace and industrial technologies.

Ceramic cylinder tube heaters emit infrared rays directly away from the tube, scattering the light energy at every angle because of their circular or cylindrical shape. Their stainless steel polished reflectors also radiate the energy of the heaters into the sauna, further enhancing the already dispersed infrared rays. Such infrared heat is absorbed by the body while the walls of the sauna remain cool.

Muscle and joint tissue pliancy

It is typical for chiropractors to recommend patients sit in a sauna for 30 minutes prior to an adjustment as a way to relax their muscles and tissues, so the ensuing chiropractic treatment is more effective. A true infrared sauna offers patients a low-heat comfort level of 110 to 140 degrees, and the added benefit of burning 500 to 800 calories per 30-minute session.

Far infrared heat waves penetrate as deep as two inches into the body. Because this type of sauna heats the body and not the air (you can sip a glass of ice water and still have ice after a 30-minute session), the heat is not harsh to the lungs or the skin in the way traditional steam and rock saunas can be.

Pain relief

Countless testimonials have shown that FIR saunas relieve the pain of ailments such as fibromyalgia, arthritis, migraines, bursitis, backaches, pulled muscles, and chronic fatigue syndrome. Across-the-board health benefits include increased circulation, lower cholesterol, reduced lactic acid, enhanced skin tone, blood pressure balancing, and detoxification. The deep warming of the blood vessels dilates them, increasing oxygen and circulation to the entire body.

Detox and stress reduction

Far infrared saunas can induce the sweating-out of toxins and heavy metals, not just water. Sitting in a far infrared sauna also melts away tension. Patients can feel their muscles relax soon after entering the unit.

In a conventional sauna, anywhere from 3 to 5 percent of the user's sweat consists of non-water components and toxins. In a far infrared sauna, that percentage rises to 15 to 20 percent. Far infrared saunas are an excellent way to detoxify heavy metals such as lead, aluminum, and mercury as well as fat-soluble toxins.

On the other hand, if the primary intent is to loosen the muscles and relax the patient prior to a chiropractic adjustment and sweating is not optimal, the door of a far infrared sauna can be left open because the infrared rays are drawn to the moisture in the body and are not absorbed into the walls of the sauna or its environs.

Ease of use

Set-up with most saunas of this type is simple. Usually they are modular in design with parts that can be assembled quickly by the owner. Disassembly is equally simple, allowing the sauna to be moved when necessary. Typical units use a standard 110-volt household power outlet, require no plumbing, and are economical and energy efficient.

You'll find a variety of customization options, but typically built-in stereo speakers are standard and can be used for relaxing music or an informative talk on chiropractic. As for pricing, upscale health clubs typically charge a dollar per minute for use of an infrared sauna.

Passive income stream

It requires no staff time to have a patient sit in a sauna prior to an adjustment, and a sauna treatment can be a value-added benefit to a chiropractic visit. With chiropractors experiencing lower insurance reimbursements, an additional on-site income stream is helpful. And although health spas increasingly offer infrared saunas, there is still a first-mover advantage available for chiropractic practices. 



DON TRALMER is the owner of Tralmer Enterprises and has been marketing infrared saunas in the upper Midwest for more than 12 years. Contact Tralmer for medical and therapeutic data and studies about the myriad health benefits of true far infrared saunas. He can be reached at 608-343-0986 or tralmer1@charter.net.