



Spokane Holistic Healing Client Handout

Infrared Sauna and Substance Abuse

Potential Benefits of Infrared Saunas for Substance Abuse Recovery:

1. **Detoxification:**
 - **Sweating** is a natural process that helps the body eliminate toxins, including some stored chemicals from substance use. Infrared saunas induce deep sweating, which may support the removal of these toxins from the body. This could be particularly helpful for those recovering from drug or alcohol use, which often leads to toxin buildup.
2. **Stress and Anxiety Relief:**
 - Many individuals in recovery experience heightened levels of anxiety and stress. The calming effects of infrared saunas, which may promote relaxation and endorphin release, can help reduce stress and promote emotional balance.
3. **Improved Sleep:**
 - Quality sleep is often disrupted in those recovering from substance abuse. The heat from infrared saunas can help relax the body and promote better sleep quality, which is essential for healing and emotional well-being during recovery.
4. **Pain Relief:**
 - Substance abuse can lead to chronic pain or withdrawal symptoms. Infrared sauna therapy is known for its ability to relieve muscle and joint pain, which could be beneficial for those experiencing discomfort during the recovery process.
5. **Mood Enhancement:**
 - Infrared saunas may have a positive impact on mood by increasing circulation, which could help in the release of endorphins (the body's "feel-good" chemicals). This can be helpful for those who experience depressive symptoms or mood swings as part of the recovery process.
6. **Social Support in Group Settings:**
 - Some recovery programs integrate group infrared sauna sessions as part of their therapy. This can offer individuals a way to connect with others in recovery while benefiting from the therapeutic effects of the sauna.

Considerations:

- **Complementary Treatment:** Infrared sauna therapy should be considered a complementary treatment rather than a replacement for traditional addiction recovery programs, such as therapy, medication-assisted treatment, or group counseling.
- **Medical Supervision:** It is essential to consult a healthcare professional before incorporating infrared saunas into a recovery regimen, especially for individuals with underlying health conditions.



Incorporating infrared saunas into a recovery plan can be beneficial for both the physical and emotional aspects of addiction recovery. However, it's important to do so carefully and alongside more traditional treatment methods. Here are some ways infrared saunas might be incorporated into a recovery plan:

How to Incorporate Infrared Saunas into Addiction Recovery

1. Consultation with a Healthcare Professional

- **Start with a professional assessment:** Before beginning any new therapy, including infrared saunas, it's important to discuss it with a healthcare provider or addiction specialist. They can help determine whether infrared saunas are appropriate, especially considering any underlying health conditions (e.g., cardiovascular issues or dehydration concerns).
- **Personalized treatment plan:** Your healthcare provider may recommend specific protocols based on your unique health needs, the stage of recovery, and any other therapies you're undergoing (e.g., counseling, medication-assisted treatment).

2. Use Infrared Sauna for Detoxification

- **Post-therapy sessions:** After a counseling or therapy session, some individuals might find that the deep relaxation provided by the sauna enhances the detoxification process and reinforces the healing from mental and emotional stress.
- **Incorporating it into your routine:** Some addiction treatment centers may have saunas available as part of their holistic wellness programs. If you are using it outside a treatment center, regular sessions (e.g., 2-3 times a week for 20-30 minutes) might be beneficial to support the detox process.
- **Hydration:** Ensure you stay well-hydrated before and after your sauna sessions to avoid dehydration. This is particularly important when detoxing.

3. Combining with Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques

- **Mindfulness or meditation in the sauna:** Some people find that the calming environment of an infrared sauna is a good space for practicing mindfulness or meditation, which can help manage stress, anxiety, and cravings. Guided meditations or breathing exercises can be done during the sauna session.
- **Reducing anxiety:** Regular sauna use, combined with deep breathing techniques, can help regulate the nervous system and reduce feelings of anxiety or irritability, which are common in early recovery stages.



4. Emotional Support and Social Connections

- **Group sauna sessions:** If you're part of a treatment center, you may have the opportunity to engage in group infrared sauna sessions. This provides an opportunity to bond with others in recovery, share experiences, and encourage mutual support.
- **Supportive community:** If you're using an infrared sauna in a more independent setting (e.g., home), consider involving family members or other members of your support group for a wellness routine. Social support is key during recovery, and sauna therapy can foster connections.

5. Monitor Emotional and Physical Responses

- **Track improvements:** Keep track of how you feel before and after each session. Do you feel less stressed or more relaxed? Are you experiencing fewer withdrawal symptoms or less anxiety? Monitoring your responses can help determine if sauna therapy is truly benefiting you and if it should be continued as part of your routine.
- **Adjust intensity if needed:** Start with shorter sessions (10-15 minutes) and gradually work your way up to longer sessions as your body adapts to the heat. Pay attention to how your body responds during the session and take breaks if needed.

6. Use Infrared Saunas to Complement Traditional Recovery Methods

- **Not a replacement for professional therapy:** While infrared sauna therapy can be a helpful tool, it should not be used as a substitute for evidence-based addiction treatments like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), medication-assisted treatment, or group therapy.
- **Holistic approach:** When combined with therapy, 12-step programs (e.g., AA or NA), and healthy lifestyle habits, infrared sauna therapy can support mental and physical well-being during the recovery process.

7. Practical Tips for Using Infrared Saunas Safely in Recovery

- **Start slow:** If you're new to infrared saunas, start with short sessions (10-15 minutes) and gradually increase as your body gets used to the heat.
- **Stay hydrated:** Drink water before, during, and after your sauna session to replenish fluids lost through sweating.
- **Rest afterward:** Give your body time to cool down and relax after each sauna session. You may feel fatigued or lightheaded, so it's important to rest and hydrate.
- **Use sauna as part of self-care:** Treat sauna sessions as part of a broader self-care regimen that includes proper nutrition, exercise, and emotional support. It can be especially helpful when integrated into a structured recovery program that emphasizes holistic healing.



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Conclusion

While infrared saunas are not a standalone treatment for substance abuse, they can be a helpful complementary tool to support detoxification, relaxation, and emotional well-being during recovery. It's essential to use them alongside proven recovery methods like therapy, medication-assisted treatment, and support groups to achieve the best outcomes. Always check with a healthcare provider to ensure they're a safe and beneficial addition to your treatment plan.