



Spokane Holistic
Healing

Spokane Holistic Healing Client Handout

Stress and Illness

Stress and illness are closely linked, as chronic stress can negatively impact both mental and physical health. When a person experiences prolonged stress, their body's natural defense system, the immune system, weakens, making them more susceptible to illnesses such as colds, infections, and even chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes.

Estimates suggest that **60-90% of illnesses** are either caused or worsened by stress. While stress alone may not directly cause all diseases, it significantly contributes to the onset, progression, or severity of many conditions.

How Stress Affects Health

1. **Weakened Immune System** – Chronic stress suppresses the immune response, increasing the likelihood of infections and slower recovery times.
2. **Increased Inflammation** – Stress triggers inflammation in the body, which is linked to conditions such as arthritis, heart disease, and autoimmune disorders.
3. **Digestive Issues** – Stress can cause stomach pain, bloating, and conditions like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or ulcers.
4. **Heart Problems** – High levels of stress can increase blood pressure and contribute to heart disease and stroke.
5. **Mental Health Effects** – Stress is a major factor in anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders, which can indirectly lead to physical illness.

Even conditions with strong genetic or environmental factors, like cancer or autoimmune diseases, can be influenced by stress. Managing stress through lifestyle changes, therapy, and relaxation techniques can significantly reduce the risk of stress-related illnesses.

Ways to Manage Stress

Infrared saunas are an excellent way to reduce stress, benefiting both the body and mind. Here's how they help:

1. Promotes Relaxation & Reduces Cortisol

- Saunas trigger the release of **endorphins** (feel-good hormones) while lowering **cortisol** (the stress hormone).
- The heat relaxes muscles, eases tension, and promotes an overall sense of well-being.



- **2. Improves Sleep**

- The drop in body temperature after a sauna session mimics the body's natural cooling process before sleep, leading to **deeper, more restful sleep**.

3. Supports the Nervous System

- Saunas stimulate the **parasympathetic nervous system**, which helps the body shift from "fight or flight" (stress mode) to "**rest and digest**" (relaxation mode).

4. Boosts Circulation & Eases Muscle Tension

- The heat increases blood flow, helping to **loosen tight muscles** and **relieve stress-related physical discomfort** (like tension headaches or stiff shoulders).

5. Detoxification & Mental Clarity

- Sweating helps flush out toxins, while the experience of sitting in a quiet, warm environment encourages **mindfulness and mental clarity**.

Red light therapy (RLT) is an effective tool for reducing stress by promoting relaxation, improving sleep, and balancing hormones. Here's how it helps:

1. Reduces Cortisol & Balances Stress Hormones

- Chronic stress leads to high **cortisol** levels, which can cause anxiety, fatigue, and inflammation.
- Red light therapy helps regulate cortisol and supports the production of **melatonin** (the sleep hormone), leading to better relaxation and stress resilience.

2. Boosts Mood & Mental Well-Being

- RLT stimulates the production of **endorphins** and **serotonin**, neurotransmitters that improve mood and reduce anxiety.
- It has been shown to help with **seasonal affective disorder (SAD)**, a type of depression linked to lack of sunlight.

3. Improves Sleep Quality

- Red light therapy enhances **melatonin production**, leading to deeper, more restful sleep.



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- Unlike blue light from screens, which disrupts circadian rhythms, red light **promotes natural sleep cycles.**

4. Reduces Inflammation & Physical Tension

- Stress often causes **muscle tightness, headaches, and body aches.**
- RLT promotes **circulation and cellular repair**, reducing inflammation and muscle soreness, which helps relieve stress-related physical discomfort.

5. Supports Nervous System & Relaxation

- Red and near-infrared light activate the **parasympathetic nervous system**, shifting the body from "fight or flight" mode into a relaxed, healing state.
- This helps lower **heart rate, blood pressure, and anxiety levels.**

How to Use Red Light Therapy for Stress Relief:

- ✓ **Daily Sessions** – 10-20 minutes per day for best results.
- ✓ **Use in the Evening** – Helps wind down before bed.
- ✓ **Pair with Meditation or Deep Breathing** – Enhances relaxation effects.
- ✓ **Target Key Areas** – Use on the face for mood benefits or the body for muscle relaxation.

Best Practices for Stress Relief with Sauna:

- ✓ **Stay Hydrated** – Drink plenty of water before and after.
- ✓ **Practice Deep Breathing** – Focus on slow, deep breaths while inside.
- ✓ **Use Essential Oils** – Adding eucalyptus or lavender can enhance relaxation.
- ✓ **Limit Session Time** – 10-20 minutes per session is ideal, depending on tolerance.

Other Practices to Manage Stress

- **Exercise regularly** to reduce tension and boost mood.
- **Practice mindfulness or meditation** to calm the mind.
- **Maintain a balanced diet** to support the body's response to stress.
- **Get enough sleep** to allow the body to heal and recover.
- **Seek social support** from friends, family, or professionals.