

Sauna use associated with reduced risk of cardiac, all-cause mortality

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A sauna may do more than just make you sweat. A new study suggests men who engaged in frequent sauna use had reduced risks of fatal cardiovascular events and all-cause mortality, according to an article published online by *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Although some studies have found sauna bathing to be associated with better cardiovascular and circulatory function, the association between regular sauna bathing and [risk](#) of sudden cardiac death (SCD) and fatal cardiovascular diseases (CVD) is not known.

Jari A. Laukkanen, M.D., Ph.D., of the University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, and coauthors investigated the association between sauna bathing and the risk of SCD, fatal coronary heart disease (CHD), fatal CVD and all-cause mortality in a group of 2,315 middle-aged men (42 to 60 years old) from eastern Finland.

Results show that during a median (midpoint) follow-up of nearly 21 years, there were 190 SCDs, 281 fatal CHDs, 407 fatal CVDs and 929 deaths from all causes. Compared with men who reported one sauna bathing session per week, the risk of SCD was 22 percent lower for 2 to 3 sauna bathing sessions per week and 63 percent lower for 4 to 7 sauna sessions per week. The risk of fatal CHD events was 23 percent lower for 2 to 3 bathing sessions per week and 48 percent lower for 4 to 7 sauna sessions per week compared to once a week. CVD death also was 27 percent lower for men who took saunas 2 to 3 times a week and 50 percent lower for men who were in the sauna 4 to 7 times a week

compared with men who indulged just once per week. For all-cause mortality, sauna bathing 2 to 3 times per week was associated with a 24 percent lower risk and 4 to 7 times per week with a 40 percent reduction in risk compared to only one sauna session per week.

The amount of time spent in the sauna seemed to matter too. Compared with men who spent less than 11 minutes in the sauna, the risk of SCD was 7 percent lower for sauna sessions of 11 to 19 minutes and 52 percent less for sessions lasting more than 19 minutes. Similar associations were seen for fatal CHDs and fatal CVDs but not for all-cause mortality events.

"Further studies are warranted to establish the potential mechanism that links sauna bathing and cardiovascular health," the study concludes.

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