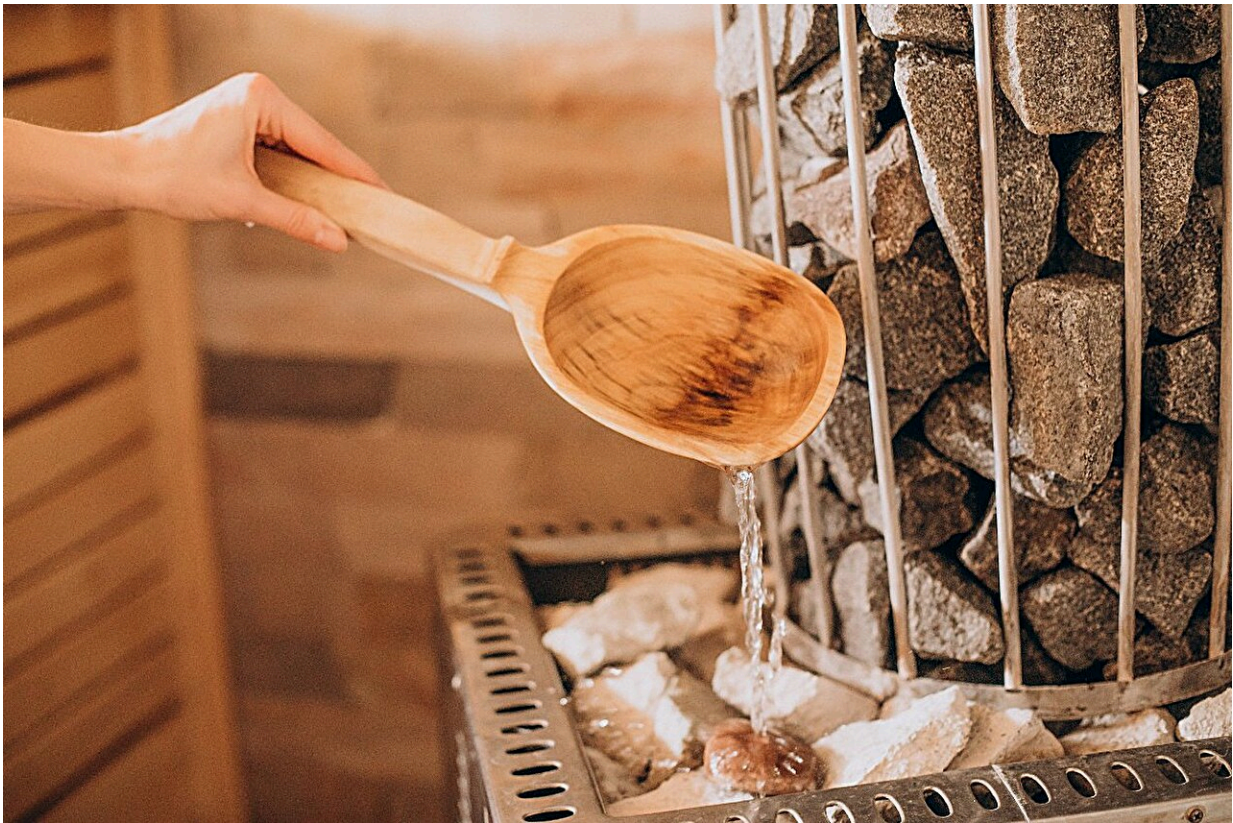


Could sauna time help curb weight gain during menopause?

July 3 2024, by Carole Tanzer Miller



A 30-minute sauna or warm bubble bath every day might help women of a certain age fend off unwanted weight gain.

That's the promising takeaway from a study in mice that shows the potential of heat treatments in [postmenopausal women](#).

Researchers found that older female mice who received a half-hour-long whole-body heat treatment gained less weight and made better use of insulin, which helps control blood sugar.

But before you build a soak or sauna session into your daily calendar, keep in mind that results of animal research don't always pan out in people.

Still, "our study suggests that whole-body heat therapy could serve as an effective, noninvasive solution for managing weight gain and [insulin resistance](#) associated with menopause," said lead researcher Soonkyu Chung, an associate professor of nutrition at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

She said heat therapy could be a practical option for postmenopausal women whose expanding waistlines put them at risk for metabolic diseases triggered by hormone changes.

"It could be easily integrated into routine health care practices through regular sessions in saunas, heated baths or with specialized heat wraps," said researcher Rong Fan, a doctoral candidate advised by Chung.

For the study, researchers removed the ovaries of older female mice to replicate postmenopausal conditions. The mice were fed a Western diet with 45% of calories from fat. For 12 weeks, one group spent 30 minutes a day in a heat chamber set to 104 degrees Fahrenheit. The other group had no heat treatment.

Those who received [heat treatment](#) had significantly lower levels of an enzyme (lactate dehydrogenase) related to age-related tissue damage.

The therapy also helped offset the [weight gain](#) induced by a [high-fat diet](#)

Compared to the other mice, the [heat therapy](#) group had less fat accumulation in key areas such as the liver and in brown fat, which helps the body burn energy. People tend to lose it as they age, which slows the metabolism.

Researchers found that heat triggered several processes that help the body burn fat and use energy more efficiently.

"A key player is a protein known as TRPV1," they wrote. "When activated by heat, TRPV1 kicks off a process known as futile calcium cycling, where the body uses up energy ... to pump calcium ions across cell membranes. This process helps increase the amount of energy the body burns."

That process also stimulates fat-burning, reducing accumulation of fat in the liver and improving insulin sensitivity.

"This series of events suggests that regular application of heat can mimic the events of calorie-burning and fat loss," said Fan, who presented the findings Sunday at the [American Society for Nutrition annual meeting](#), in Chicago.

Research presented at meetings is typically considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

"[Heat therapy] could be particularly advantageous for individuals who find [physical activities](#) challenging, providing a relaxing way to improve metabolic health," Fan added in a meeting news release.

Researchers emphasized that more study is needed to confirm the safety

and effectiveness of heat exposure for health as well as the optimal duration and intensity of the therapy.

More information: Harvard Health has more about the health effects of [saunas](#).

© 2024 [HealthDay](#). All rights reserved.

Citation: Could sauna time help curb weight gain during menopause? (2024, July 3) retrieved 23 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-07-sauna-curb-weight-gain-menopause.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.