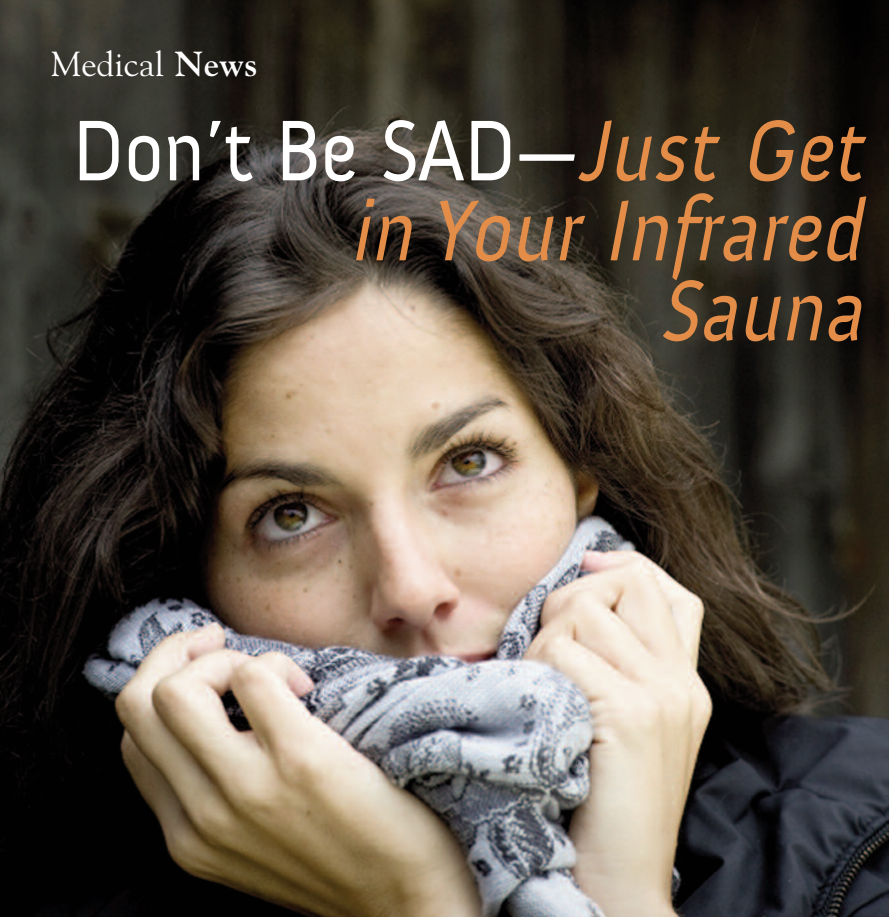


Don't Be SAD—*Just Get in Your Infrared Sauna*



by Rachel West, DO



Yes, the winter is upon us and many people notice a sharp decline in serenity and joy. The cycles of the seasons affect all of us, and the shorter hours of sunlight affect our cortisol cycling, causing a condition called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). The cold weather decreases our circulation, preventing many people from doing as much exercise—and outdoor exercise is especially more rare. Consequently, we are all getting less sun on our skin, and therefore less infrared rays. Relaxing in an infrared sauna is the perfect antidote to the wintertime blues.

Infrared rays make up part of the sun's invisible light spectrum and are essential for all life forms. They penetrate through body tissue and activate thermal energy. With infrared sauna therapy, the patient experiences heat similar to a regular sauna, but not quite as hot. The difference is that with infrared sauna therapy, the heat penetrates into the body causing the water inside the body's cells to

vibrate—increasing the body's core temperature. It is more than just a heat and sweat mechanism.

When the body's core temperature increases, circulation is stimulated, which is also very helpful for SAD, especially for those who cannot maintain an exercise regimen. Other benefits from infrared sauna therapy that can indirectly help SAD, are the enhanced detox benefits. The more we allow toxins to build in our systems, the more the pathways for detoxification become blocked. Toxins block the formation of very important neurotransmitters (serotonin and dopamine) for elevated mood in the brain. In the making of serotonin and dopamine, the conversion of amino acids is an important step. Too many toxins keep our body from the proper balancing of these and many other important brain chemicals.

Increasing circulation and relaxation is important for digestive health, which helps keep SAD in check. Taking the peaceful, relaxing time in a sauna, can reset some of the "fight or flight" mental patterns many of us experience during our days, benefitting our overall psychological health. But you may be surprised to learn that the time we take to restore and renew is also the time our body digests its food. Making the proper decisions on what to eat happens when we are more relaxed. Also, the amino acid precursors to the important "feel good" neurotransmitters are better absorbed when circulation to the digestive system improves.

In addition to the circulation, relaxation, and detoxification benefits—are the immune stimulatory benefits. When I have a patient that has an upper respiratory illness, or bronchitis, I will suggest infrared sauna therapy, because they are often too sick to exercise. This encourages lymph and blood flow, which symptomatically feels great.

I strongly recommend infrared units from Sunlighten™, the company whose products I use in my own practice. Their heating technology—the SoloCarbon® heater—makes them the most effective infrared saunas for raising core body temperature, which is a key factor in countering the symptoms of SAD. ■

Resources

Find out how you can purchase a Sunlighten sauna for your home by visiting their highly informative website at www.sunlighten.com or calling 877-292-0020.



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In addition to helping alleviate the symptoms of SAD, infrared sauna therapy may help with the following:

- + Detoxification
- + Fibromyalgia
- + Chronic fatigue
- + Anxiety or depression
- + Stress
- + Pain and inflammation
- + Heavy metal poisoning
- + Heart disease
- + Acne
- + Overweight