

NOVEMBER 2019

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Gonna Make You Sweat

Home saunas have never been hotter.

By Hadley Mendelsohn

THE FINNS CREATED the first sauna some 2,000 years ago for bathing and staying warm during bitter winters. Fast-forward to the present: Technology has evolved, wellness is all the rage, and the rest of the world has (rightly) caught on.

Today's saunas are high-heat, vented rooms for relaxing and perspiring. They've become increasingly popular in home design—"and not *just* because it feels great to sweat it out," says California-based designer Alison Pickart. A 2018 study published by Mayo Clinic found that **sauna bathing** produces the same physiological responses as moderate exercise, and can reduce hypertension risk, stress, and other chronic illnesses. So what's the catch?

None, thanks to a world of heating and design options: Installing a sauna is easier than adding a new shower, since no plumbing is required (you just need a heater). Here's what you need to know to have one at home.

Room for Two

Applied Studio squeezed this two-person unit into a garden after the homeowners traveled to Europe and got hooked on sauna bathing.



← Cedar is a popular wood for saunas because it smells so good when heated.

3 Things to Consider Before Getting a Sauna

A cheat sheet for smoother planning and installation.

1. Location

Turns out, you don't need a ton of room: "A sauna can be as small as a 5' x 5' walk-in closet," says Stephen Straughan of KAA Design. Even interior spaces will work, since ventilation can usually be run through the walls. Definitely add an exhaust fan, key to keeping mold at bay.

2. Heating

To heat your sauna to between 150° F and 195° F, the recommended temperature zone for getting health benefits, use a stone-and-coal heater (the traditional Finnish way), a gas

or electric unit (more common in the U.S. today), or infrared heat (typically the most expensive, this heats only your body and not the whole room). Installing a carbon monoxide detector is also a good idea.

3. Material

Wood is traditional for sauna design because it doesn't retain heat like tile (so you can sit on it!), and while cedar is the go-to choice, Pickart also recommends hemlock, pine, and eucalyptus. Or, to help with respiratory issues, use saltstone on the walls.

Change the Mood

Studio Griffiths gave this wooden paneling an inky stain, and then back-lit the walls for added drama. Heat-resistant lights are a sauna essential.



Place It Strategically

In this master bathroom by Blackband Design, a glass door on the sauna lets in additional light. Installing yours near a shower makes it easy to rinse off afterward.



Take It Outside

Freestanding saunas can be more affordable than in-home models because they don't require as much ventilation. They're also easier to install: This Clearlight Sanctuary Outdoor 2 sauna from [Jacuzzi](#) takes 90 minutes to set up!

PHOTOGRAPHER, TOP: SHARYN CAIRNS; DESIGNER: STUDIO GRIFFITHS. PHOTOGRAPHER, BOTTOM LEFT: RYAN GARVIN. COURTESY OF BLACKBAND DESIGN. PHOTOGRAPHER, BOTTOM RIGHT: HANNAH GARVIN