

FNL

STEAMY SECRETS

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STEAMY SECRETS

You're feeling quite chirpy after a delicious massage when your therapist tells you to sweat it out in a dimly lit and distinctly uncomfortable chamber. What's the deal with post-massage steam/sauna treatments? Weight loss? Glowing skin? Or simply relaxation? FNL has all the steamy details.

STEAM AND SAUNA: WHAT'S WHAT?

Heat therapy is the key to both, though steam treatment is about 'wet' heat while sauna is about 'dry' heat.

Steam chambers are usually maintained at 30-45 degrees centigrade, and the vapour contains essential oils like peppermint and eucalyptus. The temperature in a sauna is substantially higher, at about 70 to 90 degree centigrade, with low humidity at between 15 and 30 per cent. The essences of oils like rosemary and eucalyptus are used.

COUNT THE PERKS

Steam

- It opens pores, thereby allowing better absorption of essential oils.
- It causes vasodilatation of the skin, thereby promoting blood circulation, which in turn increases nutrient and waste transfer between cells, leaving the skin glowing.
- It increases the heart and metabolic rates; the effect is equivalent to a mild exercise schedule.
- Improved circulation contributes to the relaxation of fatigued muscles and achy joints.
- Steam inhalation is highly recommended for chest congestion, sinusitis and bronchitis. Steam helps dissolve the thick mucus layer and dilates the bronchioles, thereby clearing congestion.
- Steam inhalation improves airway hydration as well.

Sauna

- The dry heat reduces fats and excess body oils.

- It increases blood and lymphatic circulation.
- It heats up the body in winter and prior to a massage.
- It produces perspiration, which aids in the removal of toxins.
- Relaxation is a given, as the body's natural painkillers, beta-endorphins and norepinephrines are released.



ANY RED ALERTS?

There are some apprehensions about steam and sauna therapies. It is felt that the application of heat should ideally be restricted to areas below the neck to avoid complications like high blood pressure.

Dr CM Pradyumna, Director of Medicine at the Vedic Village in Kolkata, argues against popular spa practices, asserting that one's eyes, heart and genitals should not be exposed to heat. These organs should ideally be covered with wet clothes and lotus petals, he feels.

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Take a look at the list below. If you have any of these conditions, it may be better to avoid a steam/sauna session or, at the very least, get the go-ahead from a qualified spa therapist.

- All stages of pregnancy (although local sudation may be prescribed)
- Menstruation
- High and low blood pressure
- Skin prone to broken capillaries or other skin disorders
- Heart disease
- Tuberculosis
- Asthma
- Epilepsy

TIPS

- An honest interaction with the therapist to discuss prior medical history or disorders is essential.
- The eyes, heart and genitals should be covered properly. The head should be completely covered with a wet towel. 🍷
- Consume water, herbal tea and fresh juices before and after the treatment.
- Food should be avoided three hours prior to the treatment.
- Ditch alcohol and caffeine for a while, before or after.
- Don't plunge into the pool right after a steam or sauna session. Let your body temperature fall to normal first.
- People with dry skin should avoid the sauna.
- The moment you start feeling uncomfortable, exit the chamber.
- Never go for steam and sauna sessions in succession.
- Proper rest is absolutely essential after either treatment.

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PETALS OF THE PAST

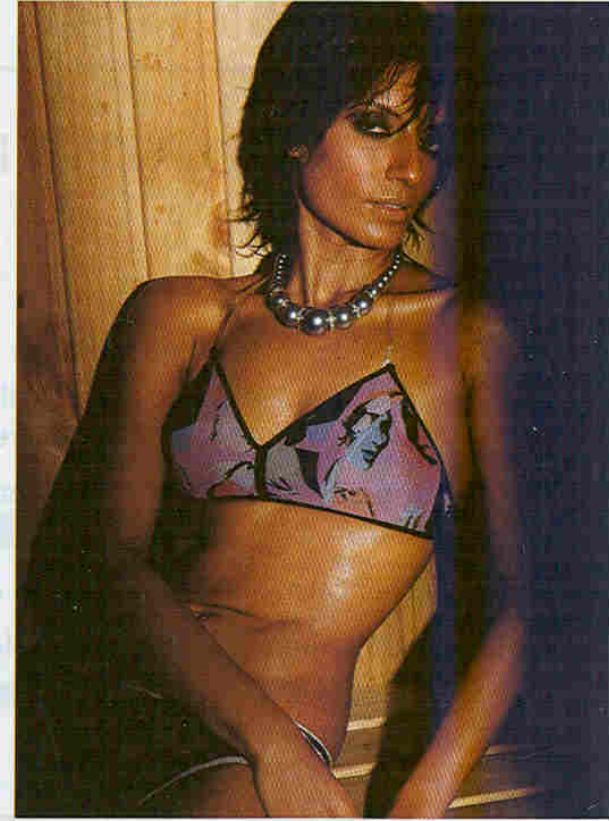
- Having gained popularity as modern relaxation practices, steam and sauna have actually originated from Indian ayurveda. The concept of 'swedam' (perspiration) is the key to both steam and sauna. 'Jenthaga swedam' is an ayurvedic concept wherein oils are splashed all over the body before subjecting it to heat. This is the same process followed in modern steam

chambers. The sauna, on the other hand, uses the concept of 'agneya swedam' (dry heat).

- Ayurveda prescribes its version of sauna to individuals with kapha* aggravation. Steam therapy is recommended for those who have a mixed constitution of pitha* and kapha*.

[*Vatha, Pitha and Kapha are three bioenergetic forces that control the anatomy and physiology of human body.]

Inputs from Dr. Renju Paphel,
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By Satarupa Chakraborty with inputs from Piasi Sinha and Marylin Aloysius → Model:Roopa Vaid (Elite Model Management) → Location Courtesy: Spa Zieta
Additional information courtesy: Dr. Sanjeev Singh, New Delhi, Gurpreet Kaur, Sonar Spa at Sonar Bangla Sheraton and Towers, Kolkata
Pushpa Nair, Ananda in the Himalayas, Garhwal, Uttaranchal, Dr. Jairam Nair, Amatrtra Spa, New Delhi, Attar, Le Meridien Spa, Bangalore, R Raghu, Leela Palace, Bangalore