

ARE SAUNAS SAFE FOR CHILDREN?

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

In the wellness world, few rituals are as time-honored and beneficial as the sauna. But as more families embrace home saunas and wellness routines, a common question arises: Is it safe for young children to use a sauna?

The short answer is “Yes - with the right supervision and guidelines”.

Saunas and Children: A Finnish Tradition

In Finland, the birthplace of sauna culture, children have been going to saunas since infancy for generations. It's not unusual for a baby to enjoy a brief sauna session on a parent's lap before their first birthday. The Finnish Sauna Society promotes family sauna use as a relaxing and beneficial custom—emphasizing comfort, safety, and shared enjoyment over strict routines or heat endurance.

This Finnish tradition, paired with clinical studies, helps affirm that sauna bathing is not only safe for children, but also culturally embraced in parts of the world where wellness is built into daily life.

What the Research Says

A 1990 study in The Annals of Clinical Research observed children aged 5–16 using saunas regularly with no adverse effects when sessions were brief and properly supervised. Pediatric associations in countries like Finland and Germany have echoed that sauna use for healthy children can be completely safe when introduced gently.

Benefits for Young Sauna-Goers

Although most studies focus on adults, children may experience:

- Improved immunity: Sauna use can stimulate white blood cell production.
- Better sleep: The soothing heat and relaxation can promote deeper rest.
- Stress reduction: A calm, screen-free environment is emotionally grounding.
- Routine bonding: Sauna time becomes a nurturing ritual shared with parents.

Safe Sauna Guidelines for Children

1. Lower the temperature Ideal range: 50°C to 65°C (122°F–149°F)
2. Keep sessions short - 5-10 minutes
3. Always supervise
4. Hydrate before and after
5. Cool down gently
6. Avoid during illness

When to Consult a Doctor

Children with heart conditions, respiratory sensitivities, epilepsy, or chronic illnesses should only use a sauna under medical supervision.

Final Thought: Start Slow, Make It Fun

Introducing children to sauna culture can be a wonderful way to teach mindfulness, build family rituals, and promote body awareness. Like any wellness activity, it should be guided by comfort, consent, and care. Let your child lead the experience—if they want out after 2 minutes, that's perfectly okay. The goal isn't endurance; it's connection and well-being.

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Sources

1. Finnish Sauna Society. <https://sauna.fi/>
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3. Beever, R. Far-infrared saunas for treatment of cardiovascular risk factors. Complement Ther Med. 2009. PubMed
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