

Christian Healthy Lifestyle Episode: 170

David (00:00.408)

So what do you think? If someone had a pill that would give you the benefits of exercise without exercising, detoxify heavy metals, lower chronic whole body inflammation, help you lose weight, slow the aging process, boost immune function, improve cognitive function, increase growth hormone levels, preserve muscle mass and more, people would be taking out second mortgages on their houses and camping out outside the pharmacy to be first in line to get a hold of it.

those benefits do exist, but it's not in a pill. It's in sauna bathing.

David (00:43.202)

Welcome to the Christian Healthy Lifestyle Podcast where I help Christians over 40 maximize their health potential so they can stay out of the doctor's office, avoid chronic disease, age gracefully, and live abundantly. I'm your host, David Sandstrom, naturopathic doctor and certified nutritional counselor, and this is episode number 170.

You probably noticed that the tagline I just used is a little different. I've been working on creating the new membership club and it's helped me to go a little deeper with the messaging for the podcast. My heart's passion is to help you extend your health span. Health span is the amount of years we spend free from chronic disease and disabilities. Health span compresses the time spent in poor health in our later years in life. Now I've been saying for quite some time,

that this show is about aging gracefully and living abundantly. Well, in order to do that, we've got to stay out of the doctor's office and avoid chronic disease. It's essentially two sides of the same coin. So I'm drilling down a little bit more on the messaging for the podcast and what the new online health club is gonna be about. I haven't settled on a name yet for the health club. I want you to help me with that. I'm looking for fans of the show.

to give me feedback and help shape what the health club turns into. A lot of people these days are waking up to the idea that the medical approach to health is, well, less than ideal, to say the least. So I want to help you

declare your independence from our nation's disease care system and take back your health. This new membership club is going to give you the information and the tools you need to stay out of the doctor's office

and avoid chronic disease. So if joining an online community of health conscious followers of Jesus Christ and getting exclusive content from me and my guests each month, if that sounds good to you, then I encourage you to get on the wait list right now and I'll provide you with some more details. Go to my website chlpodcast.com forward slash membership, join the wait list right now. Getting on the wait list won't cost you anything.

David (02:59.886)

Later, if you decide to join as a founding member, you'll lock in the lowest price that'll ever be offered for the membership. Your monthly costs will never go up and you'll be a part of something really special. Do it right now. You have my permission to pause this episode, go get on the wait list, come back when you're done. I'll be here waiting for you when you get back, I promise. I look forward to hearing from you. Now, last week, I said we'd be covering hot and cold therapy. Well, as...

often happens here in the show. Once I create the outline for these episodes, I found out that I've overestimated how much information I can share in a single episode. this week, we're going to be talking about sauna bathing, and next week, we're going to be talking about cold plunging. One of the more effective ways to extend your health span is to get in a sauna on a regular basis. There's a boatload of research coming out that's been done on the health benefits

from regular sauna use, and they're absolutely astounding. Look at this article here in the journal *Experimental Gerontology* published in 2021. It's entitled, *Sauna Use as a Lifestyle Practice to Extend Healthspan*. Here's what they say. In recent decades, sauna bathing has emerged as a probable means to extend healthspan based on compelling data from observational, interventional,

and mechanistic studies. Of particular interest are the findings from large prospective population-based cohort studies of health outcomes among sauna users that identified strong dose-dependent links between sauna use and reduced morbidity and mortality. Reduced morbidity means that

there were fewer chronic diseases and disabilities, and that translates to longer health span. Mortality, of course, means death from all causes,

and that translates to lifespan. So sauna bathing has positive impact on both. Now this article goes on to say that, of particular interest are the findings from studies of participants in the kuopio ischemic heart disease or KIHHD risk factor study. This ongoing prospective population-based cohort study of health outcomes is in more than 2,300 middle-aged men from Eastern Finland

David (05:23.713)

has identified associations between sauna use and reduced risk for age-related impairments including cardiovascular disease, neurodegenerative disease, metabolic dysfunction, and immunological decline. Among men who reported the use of the sauna four to seven times a week, the risk of cardiovascular mortality was 50 % lower than among men who reported using the sauna only once weekly. In addition, the risk of all-cause mortality

was 40 % lower among frequent sauna users compared to infrequent users, independent of conventional risk factors. Did you hear that? In a large, long-term ongoing study, frequent sauna use reduced the risk for age-related impairments, including cardiovascular disease, heart health, neurodegenerative diseases, which include cognitive impairment, things like dementia and Alzheimer's,

metabolic dysfunction that includes blood sugar regulation, weight control, mitochondrial energy production, which is gonna impact just about anything to do with our physiology. These men also had less immunological decline, which means their immune system function was improved, which has implications for autoimmune diseases like Crohn's or lupus. Now.

Our immune system is responsible for fighting off undesirable microscopic organisms like viruses, bacteria, and fungi. They also eliminate rogue cancer cells on a daily basis. Now, in this study, the risk of dying from a heart attack got reduced by 50 % and the risk of dying from anything, all-cause mortality, was slashed by 40%. Am I starting to get your attention?

Would you like to learn more about sauna bathing? We're just getting warmed up. Now, I want to explain why this positive impact on our health and physiology is so far reaching. You know, I often say that we maximize our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's natural design for spirit, mind, and body. God designed our bodies to be challenged with different temperatures. In our modern world, we live in an isothermal environment.

David (07:45.773)

ISO is Latin for same or constant. When I was studying weather in my career pilot program many years ago, we learned that on a weather chart, an isotherm is a line of equal temperature. In our modern society, we're following a 75 degree isotherm like Dorothy followed the yellow brick road. We go from our 75 degree houses to our 75 degree cars.

to our 75 degree office buildings, to our 75 degree gyms, and then back to our 75 degree homes. That isothermal existence is not part of our God given natural design. Just as our muscles and joints need to be exercised in order to thrive, so does our autonomic nervous system and the other God given thermal protective mechanisms in our bodies. We're designed to get outdoors and experience

various temperatures, both hot and cold. And as it turns out, that's very beneficial to our health. know, animals in the wild don't suffer with chronic disease, but put a zebra or a giraffe in a zoo and they start to develop metabolic dysfunction that manifests in chronic diseases like obesity and cancer. That happens because they're living in an unnatural environment. We're no different.

We were designed to be outside on a regular basis and exposed to sunlight and temperature extremes. We've created an environment where we're basically living in zoo. Our modern conveniences make us more comfortable, but the isothermal conditions that we've created are making us sick. Now, there's a biblical principle in play here. James chapter one verses two and four says this.

David (09:54.844)

A life without stress is a life with no growth. Back in episode 165, recently, I had a Greek olive oil farmer by the name of Mariana Devetsoglou.

And she explained in that episode that it's a good thing for the olive trees to be stressed with dry conditions because that stress causes the tree to produce more antioxidants, which makes the olive oil more potent and have more health promoting properties. The same principle applies here. If we never experienced thermal stress, our vitality won't be as strong and robust as it could be. Now, I don't want to make this episode too complicated or technical.

But I want to give you a couple of reasons why sauna bathing is so effective. During high heat exposure, our bodies go through a process called hormesis. Hormesis is our body's response to repeated low level beneficial stress. Remember, our bodies have a God given built in intelligence and we adapt or acclimate to repeated stressful events. And that adaptation prepares us for

similar or more challenging stressful events in the future. Now, it's important to remember that there's a law of diminishing returns here. We can't overdo it. What we want to do is find that sweet spot where our bodies are adapting but not breaking down. The first thing that happens when we're exposed to high levels of heat is the skin temperature goes up. It can reach as high as 102 degrees. Our bodies adapt by increasing cardiac output

and heart rate can increase by as much as 100 beats per minute over our resting heart rate. That's about the equivalent to moderate exercise. And our bodies then redirect blood flow from the core vital organs out to the extremities. That helps facilitate cooling. Now, we also begin to sweat, and that sweat helps us to excrete heavy metals like mercury, cobalt, cadmium, lead that comes out in our perspiration.

David (12:05.217)

One of the more important things that happens in this adaptation response is an increased expression of heat shock proteins, or HSPs. Here's what that same article that we referenced earlier from the Journal of Experimental Gerontology has to say about heat shock proteins. HSPs play prominent roles in many cellular processes, including immune function, cell signaling, cell cycle regulation,

Now cell cycle regulation is another term for energy production and proteome homeostasis. Proteomes are groups of proteins that are in and

around our cells and homeostasis is our body's way of establishing balance or equilibrium. Loss of proteome integrity is a hallmark of the aging process and intrinsically disordered or damaged dysfunctional proteins are common features

in age-related diseases such as cardiovascular and neurodegenerative diseases. Increased expression of HSPs prevents protein disorder and aggregation by repairing proteins that have been damaged. In other words, heat shock proteins boost our immune function, help produce cellular energy, slow the aging process, and help to prevent age-related chronic degenerative diseases.

As far as I'm concerned, anyone over 40 should be made aware of this information and the medical establishment is just not doing a very good job of getting this message out. Again, if we want to maximize our health potential so that we can stay out of the doctor's office, age gracefully and live abundantly, we've got to prevent chronic degenerative disease. We should be adopting lifestyle habits that promote health span.

And regular exposure to heat is a really important lifestyle habit that we can easily incorporate into our weekly routines. Another benefit is it fights chronic inflammation. Heat exposure causes our bodies to release a pro-inflammatory cytokine called interleukin 6. Now chronically elevated interleukin 6 is harmful. It's considered an excellent marker for chronic systemic inflammation

David (14:27.862)

which is the source of all kinds of metabolic health problems and disorders, but acute or transitory elevation of interleukin-6 is beneficial because it activates an anti-inflammatory compound called interleukin-10. The interleukin-10 is anti-inflammatory. Again, since sauna bathing mimics the effects of exercise in the body, it serves to lower chronic inflammation and this

Interleukin-10 activation is the mechanism that makes that happen. Sauna bathing also improves cardiovascular health. During a sauna session, heart rate can go up by as much as 100 beats per minute from our resting rate, which is approximately what we experience during moderate exercise. Sauna bathing has also been shown to lower blood pressure and improve

flow-mediated dilation, which is an excellent measure of cardiovascular health.

It's called the shear rate. In other words, people who use saunas regularly, as their heart pumps in that systolic state where the blood pressure rises, the arteries accommodate that increased blood flow by dilating more efficiently. Their arteries are more malleable and that reduces the friction that the blood experiences as it flows through the artery. Now that's tremendously beneficial when it comes to preventing heart disease.

Now, I'll take a deep dive on shear rate in episode number 139. I talk about the real cause of atherosclerosis or heart disease. You may want to listen to that episode if you're concerned about heart disease. It's episode 139. Now, in the KIHD study that I mentioned earlier, they talk about dose-dependent cardiovascular benefits that are associated with frequency and duration of sauna use. Those researchers compared three groups of people.

One group did sauna bathing once a week. The other group did sauna bathing two to three times a week. And the last group were in the sauna four to seven times a week. Now the two to three times a week group had a 22 % lower risk of sudden cardiac death than the once per week group. And the four to seven times a week group had a 63 % lower risk of sudden cardiac deaths. That data

David (16:54.41)

is for heart-related fatalities. Now the numbers were very similar for heart disease or plaque deposits in the arteries that didn't end up in a fatality, also for hypertension or high blood pressure. In both cases, they saw dramatic improvements in the more frequent sauna bathers. In that study, they showed that even a single sauna session was enough to see measurable results in lowering blood pressure. Sauna therapy is also good for brain health.

and mental cognition, it does that by helping to release brain-derived neurotrophic factor, or BDNF. BDNF promotes the growth of new neurons and forms more neural connections in the brain. It's active in the areas of the brain that are involved in learning, long-term memory, and executive functioning or reasoning. Sauna use also has a positive impact on heart rate variability, or HRV.

Now heart rate variability is not so much a measure of heart health as it is a measure of our autonomic nervous system function. As we breathe in, our heart rate increases slightly. And as we exhale, our heart rate decreases slightly. Now the difference between those two rates is our heart rate variability or HRV. Now it may seem that you would prefer to have less variability in your heart rate, but the opposite is actually true.

A person has a larger heart rate variability, which means you're in a state of ease and not stressed. HRV is an excellent measure of not only cardiovascular health, but overall metabolic health in general. Sauna use also increases growth hormone levels. They can rise anywhere from 2 to 16 times their normal levels, depending on the temperature and the duration of the session.

Growth hormone is responsible for muscle retention and weight management. Growth hormone production decreases with age. So once again, sauna bathing is useful for those who want to age gracefully. Sauna use also enhances physical fitness. It does that in multiple ways. It enhances our cardio respiratory fitness by increasing VO2 max. VO2 max is our body's capacity

David (19:20.558)

to take up oxygen and not surprisingly, our ability to take up oxygen decreases with age. Sauna use also promotes physical fitness by enhancing musculoskeletal strength, endurance, flexibility, and improving body composition by preserving muscle mass. So what do you think? If someone had a pill that would give you the benefits of exercise without exercising, detoxify heavy metals,

lower chronic whole body inflammation, help you lose weight, slow the aging process, boost immune function, improve cognitive function, increase growth hormone levels, preserve muscle mass and more. People would be taking out second mortgages on their houses and camping out outside the pharmacy to be first in line to get a hold of it. Those benefits do exist, but it's not in a pill. It's in sauna bathing. If you're like,

Okay Dave, I get it. I'm ready to explore buying a home sauna. There's a great sauna that I highly recommend. It's made by SaunaSpace. SaunaSpace uses near-infrared bulbs to produce the heat. Near-infrared

bulbs have almost zero EMF or electromagnetic frequencies. Now if you're going to invest in home sauna, you don't want one that produces high amounts of EMF. Many of the far-infrared saunas on the market do exactly that.

and that can be very counterproductive to your health seeking efforts. I have an affiliate relationship with Sauna Space. You can support the show by using my link. Go to my website chlpodcast.com forward slash resources, click on the Sauna Space link and if you make a purchase, you won't pay any more, but you'll be supporting the show in the process. Now there are some contraindications or precautions for sauna use. Pregnant women should not go in the sauna.

Someone who's recently had a heart attack should not go in the sauna while their body is healing. Men who are having trouble with fertility should discontinue sauna use because it can lower the sperm count, which is easily correctable by discontinuing sauna use. And children should not use a sauna because children have more difficulty regulating their body temperature than adults do. Now, as always, I'm not a medical doctor and anything I say here in the show is for informational purposes only.

David (21:43.562)

and none of this information is intended to diagnose, treat, or cure any disease. As always, I advise you to consult with your doctor or physician before starting a new fitness program. Now I want you to know I practice what I preach. Here's a picture of my sauna. This is the sauna I have in my basement. And here's my cold plunge tub, which we'll be talking about in the next episode. Now don't forget, if you want to become a part of the new online health club that I'm starting, go to my website,

chlpodcast.com forward slash membership and get on the wait list. Now you'll be eligible to become a founding member and lock in a discounted price for life. That's it for now. Thank you for listening. I appreciate you. I'll talk with you next time. Be blessed.