

Infrared sauna in patients with rheumatoid arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis. A pilot study showing good tolerance, short-term improvement of pain and stiffness, and a trend towards long-term beneficial effects.

[Clinical Rheumatology](#). 2009 Jan;28(1):29-34. Epub 2008 Aug 7.

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Abstract

To study the effects of infrared (IR) Sauna, a form of total-body hyperthermia in patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and ankylosing spondylitis (AS) patients were treated for a 4-week period with a series of eight IR treatments. Seventeen RA patients and 17 AS patients were studied. IR was well tolerated, and no adverse effects were reported, no exacerbation of disease. Pain and stiffness decreased clinically, and improvements were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.001$ in RA and AS patients, respectively) during an IR session. Fatigue also decreased. Both RA and AS patients felt comfortable on average during and especially after treatment. In the RA and AS patients, pain, stiffness, and fatigue also showed clinical improvements during the 4-week treatment period, but these did not reach statistical significance. No relevant changes in disease activity scores were found, indicating no exacerbation of disease activity. In conclusion, infrared treatment has statistically significant short-term beneficial effects and clinically relevant period effects during treatment in RA and AS patients without enhancing disease activity. IR has good tolerability and no adverse effects.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18685882>