

Mikkel Aaland



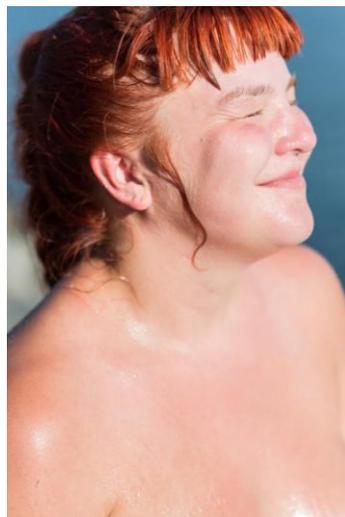
"It's All an Adventure"

Why Sweat? A Medical Research Update

When I lived in Europe in the 70s researching material for my book *Sweat* I had access to a great body of scientific literature about the effect of sweating and heating the body. Most of it was written in German by Germans and Finns. Russian banya medical research, which I was told was extensive, was hidden behind an iron curtain.

From the time of the publication of my book *Sweat* (1978) to now, the American public (and much of English speaking world) has largely been oblivious to solid scientific research on sweat bathing. This is partially because of the language barrier (few Americans have access to the foreign studies and even fewer read German or Russian) but mostly because America really doesn't have that much interest in bathing. (The bathing culture of America, if you call it that, traditionally has been the quick, efficient and superficial shower.)

But times are changing. The wellness movement and a significant interest in the sauna and other sweat baths imported from Russia, the Middle East, Japan, and Korea, has exposed Americans to new ways of staying clean and healthy. During the last few years several important studies, written in English, have established clear scientific evidence of the benefits of sweat bathing. These studies have made headlines in major newspapers such as the New York Times.



Here is a roundup of some of the latest.

SAUNAS CAN PROTECT YOUR BRAIN

Perspiring in steamy temperatures might help you preserve your memory. In a study recently published in the journal Age and Ageing, men who used a sauna multiple times a week had a lower risk of developing dementia and Alzheimer's disease. One possible explanation is that saunas improve the lining of the blood vessels, allowing for more productive blood flow to organs like the heart and brain.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27932366>

SAUNAS CAN REDUCE PAIN INTENSITY

Saunas may help headache sufferers, in particular. One study in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine examined the use of saunas to help relieve pain and treat the symptoms of chronic tension-type headache, frequent headaches that occur more than 15 days per month. After eight weeks of sauna exposure, participants reported a significant improvement in headache intensity.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25636135>

SAUNAS ARE GOOD FOR YOUR HEART

Heart disease is the leading cause of death, according to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, but regular roasting in a sauna can help keep your heart healthy and extend your life, according to a study published in JAMA Internal Medicine. Though the exact reason is unknown, long-term sauna bathing has been associated with better cardiovascular and circulatory functions, lower blood pressure, and enhanced function in the heart's left ventricle. "We used to think that saunas are dangerous for people with heart problems like arrhythmias, but now we know they not only don't increase the incidence of arrhythmias, but they actually decrease the most concerning type of abnormal rhythms of the heart, ventricular arrhythmias," says Dr. Shah.

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/saunas-and-your-health>



SAUNA AND GENE EXPRESSION

At this year's International Sauna Congress one of the more interesting reports came from Frederik Otzen Bagger, a researcher from Denmark on short-term effect of sauna on gene expression. This was the first time I've seen a study documenting the effects of heat bathing on a genetic level. Bagger got his results from crunching data from a Saudi survey. What these changes mean in terms of health are yet to be determined but just exploring this on a genetic level was groundbreaking.

A Who's Who in Research

I am fortunate to personally know several doctors, researchers, and writers who are involved on one level or another with collecting and publishing serious medical research regarding sweat and sweat bathing.

Here is my ever-growing list of go-to people for information on sweat bathing and specifically, health:

Jack Tsonis is the president of the Australian Sweat Bathing Association and one of its goals is to promote and conduct medical research around sauna, and to offer evidence-based medical advice where possible. <http://asbasweat.org/about/goals/>

Sarah Everts is a science writer based in Berlin currently writing a definitive book on physiological, social, and cultural effects of sweat. <http://saraheverts.com>

Andrew Weil, MD is a one of the gurus of alternative medicine and a long-time proponent of sweat bathing. I met Andrew in the late 70s when we both shared a fascination with sweat bathing and eclipses. <https://www.drweil.com>

Risto Elomaa is the president of the International Sauna Society, a dear friend, and a go-to person for anything related to the latest medical research on sweat bathing, and sweat bathing in general. <https://www.sauna.fi/english/international-sauna-society/>

Stephen Colmant is a New Mexico clinical psychologist, passionate sweat bather, and the author of Sweat Therapy, a Guide to Greater Well-Being. <https://www.amazon.com/Sweat-Therapy-Guide-Greater-Well-Being-ebook/dp/B004NIFPA0>

Sean Mullen is the Director of the Exercise, Technology & Cognition (ETC) Laboratory, and conducts research that includes documenting the cardiovascular and cognitive benefits of using the sauna or steam-room usage after exercise sessions. <http://kch.illinois.edu/mullen>

Dr Reinhard R Bergel is the CEO of H-e-a-t. Inc who has developed therapy education, consultation, products and services for the Spa industry. He is the author of The Spa Encyclopedia: A Guide to Treatments & Their Benefits for Health & Healing <https://h-e-a-t.com/about-us/bio.html>

Hans Hägglund, is a medical doctor and one of the primary leaders and organizers of the Swedish Bastu Academy. <https://www.bastuakademien.se/sv-SE>

Mark Timmerman, M.D is a Family Physician and Sports Medicine Specialist in Wisconsin, USA. He has written and lectured widely on the health benefits of regular sauna use. <https://www.finnleo.com/hubfs/assets/health-benefits-library/general-sauna-benefits/Health-Benefits-of-Sauna.pdf>

Jari Laukkanen is a professor at the University of Eastern Finland and the one mostly responsible for several widely published long-term studies on the sauna and health, including the recent report and sauna and the heart published in JAMA.

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I recently photographed this 80-year-old Japanese woman after she exited a 1300-year old kama-buro in Japan. Her skin was amazingly clear and her smile heart-warming.

Huden er guden (Skin is God) By Dr. Jon Anders Halvorsen

I want to congratulate my cousin Dr. Jon Anders Halvorsen on the publication of his new book, *Huden er guden* (Skin is God). It's a great read about the body's largest organ, skin. And yes, he gives the sweat bath credit for helping maintain healthy skin. The book is written in Norwegian but I am confident it will be published in English and Jon Anders will have a wider audience for this important subject. http://www.kagge.no/index.cfm?tmpl=butikk&a=product_inline&&kid=1195672&b_id=1695629

Perfect Sweat Update

We have uploaded an updated Perfect Sweat teaser that includes scenes from our latest shoot in Italy and Germany. Click [here](#) to view the teaser.

Perfect Sweat: Production Stills Sauna Aufguss episode, is now viewable on [Blurb](#).

And a hard copy can be purchased on [Amazon](#).

On March 18th we are head to Japan to shoot the next episode and then, on April 2nd, we are off to Turkey to shoot there. Our Scandinavian episode, which includes Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, is scheduled to shoot in June.

We are on track to release the 9 episodes of Perfect Sweat in 2020.

Follow the project on Instagram to see photos of my travels and the development of Perfect Sweat: <https://www.instagram.com/perfect.sweat/>

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