

## SENSIBLE HOMES

## In-home sauna kits affordable

**Q:** I have seen some reasonably priced sauna kits which use electricity for the heat. Do these consume much electricity and what designs should I consider in a kit big enough for one or two people?

**A:** Using a small sauna can be a healthy way to relax at home. The hot dry environment in a sauna does affect many systems in your body, so it would be wise to consult your physician before using one.

Saunas are heated by electricity, and using a small one may not increase your utility bills significantly.

If you have been in a sauna, you know how warm you continue to feel after you are out.

When you feel chilly, a quick sauna is more energy efficient than setting the furnace thermostat a few degrees higher.

The best sauna kits use insulated walls with R-19 value.

They also incorporate reflective foil inside the wall cavity to block the radiant-heat loss from the walls. Heat loss through the sauna's walls is not a total loss because it ends up helping to heat the house.

One of the newer technologies is infrared heating from several heat lamps instead of the traditional hot rocks with a heating element.

This infrared heat energy penetrates into your body to provide a similar effect to the very hot dry air in a traditional sauna bath.

The least expensive method (about \$750) is with a sauna tent with an infrared heat lamp set (uses standard 120 volts), which heats the interior to about 115 to 120 degrees.

This is warm enough to keep the side of your body not facing the lamps from feeling chilly. You rotate on the bench every several minutes.

For about \$1,000 more, you can get a standard 4-by-4-foot cedar sauna kit small enough to function satisfactorily with the infrared lamp set. There are very small hot rock heaters



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which can be plugged into a standard 120-volt wall outlet, though they will take a long time to heat the interior of a sauna room.

Since you mentioned a kit, you probably are referring to a precut unit. This includes all the pieces of lumber and hardware needed to assemble the sauna.

Another option is a modular sauna which is delivered to your home preassembled in several large sections. These typically cost about \$1,000

more than the identical precut kit, and may require an electrician's help.

The following companies offer sauna kits: Amerrec Products, 800-331-0349, [www.amerrec.com](http://www.amerrec.com); Cedarbrook Sauna & Steam, 800-426-3929, [www.cedarbrooksauna.com](http://www.cedarbrooksauna.com); Finnleo, 800-346-6536, [www.finnleo.com](http://www.finnleo.com); Mr. Sauna, 800-767-8326, [www.mrsauna.com](http://www.mrsauna.com); and Thermasol, 800-776-0711, [www.thermasol.com](http://www.thermasol.com).

Send inquiries to James Dulley, Houston Chronicle, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit [www.dulley.com](http://www.dulley.com).



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**HOME SAUNA:** This cedar sauna has features such as wooden back rests and recessed lighting.