

Still studying the benefits of NIR - near infrared light

People often stop me in a grocery store and comment how well their woodstove still works. How lucky was I to be involved with such an industry. We would help homeowners select a wood-burning appliance, advise on location and design and install it. A product that would change their lifestyle.

I've always been intrigued by how well simple pieces of trees can heat a modest home, just right. It's almost like this was God's gift to mankind to stay warm.

Wood heating is not for everyone, but for those that embrace it, it provides satisfaction in knowing they will be warm no matter what mother nature throws at us. And its carbon neutral if done right.

But there is another attribute of fire that most people are unaware of, near infrared light (NIR).

The light spectrum that we see does not penetrate our skulls, so all our thoughts and brain activity are born in darkness. But research is now discovering that the sun does in fact penetrate our brain.

If you were to look at a scientific chart of the energy from the Sun, we can see only a sliver of visible light that we call the light spectrum. Next to the violet side of the spectrum is ultraviolet, (UV). We can't see UV but many animals can such as pit vipers which includes rattlesnakes and birds. We love birds because of their colours, but birds see themselves much better because they can see UV light. Of course, it's common knowledge that UV light on our skin helps us to produce vitamin D, but it doesn't penetrate our bodies or brains.

On the other side of our spectrum of light next to yellow is near infrared (NIR), which we also can't see. It does however penetrate our bodies and brains, but you need to be outside because it gets filtered out by the roof over your head. In adults it can penetrate our skulls, but due to body mass can't reach our internal organs. In small children it can penetrate their whole bodies.

Researchers are still studying the benefits of NIR, and there are many. In

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Rooftops

any event, this should be a wake-up to spend time in the outdoors, especially


children. The sun emits huge amounts of NIR, but to a lesser degree so does the moon. Many children spend far too much time indoors and artificial lighting from compact fluorescent and LED light bulbs, or TVs and computer screens do not produce NIR light. Believe it or not, the old incandescent light bulbs and candles produce a small amount of NIR.

As I've already mentioned, a wood-burning stove with a glass door also emits NIR light.


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