

August 2023

Nature improves health & well-being



Nature & Well-being

Imagine this: sparkling aqua blue waves sweep over a soft golden shore as the scent of an ocean breeze fills the air. A lush waterfall flows by vibrant emerald green ferns and careens over shiny black river rocks. On a stroll through the woods, snowflakes land peacefully on your shoulders and the majestic pine trees around you. Where is your mind now? Did you experience a brief imaginary nature reprieve?

Spending more time in nature can improve your physical and mental well-being. Being outside in the natural light has been found to help with anxiety and depression. This could be due to the combination of being more physically active while enjoying a calm, serene setting. Spending more time in natural settings can boost your attention span, creativity, and ability to connect with other people. Taking walks in nature may lead to a better mood and improved memory when compared to walking in an urban setting. Taking a nature stroll may also decrease negative thinking and worry. This helps cultivate greater creativity, generosity, and resilience.

Humans have a biological need to spend time outdoors. Spending too little time in nature may negatively affect your health. The average American spends 93% of their life indoors. Studies suggest that the disconnect between nature and children appears to be related to an increase in childhood obesity, attention issues, and anxiety.






Fortunately, spending a few moments in nature can help reverse some negative side effects of spending too much time inside. You don't have to plan a huge camping trip or extravagant nature outing to reap the benefits. You can take a few minutes to enjoy flowers that are blooming or pause to appreciate a sunset. You can go for a walk at a nearby nature trail or even picnic in a grassy park that has a few trees and shrubs. No matter what you choose to do, there is much to gain from being outside. People who spend 120 minutes outdoors each week reported having a greater sense of well-being than those who didn't get outside.

If you can't get outside, then try to bring nature inside by adding plants to your home or office. Indoor spaces with plants can increase your productivity and improve your well-being. You can also take a few moments to listen to recordings of nature sounds while viewing paintings or videos of natural settings. Consider speaking to your primary care provider if you are struggling with stress, anxiety, or any other health concerns.



Five benefits of connecting with nature

Connecting with nature is associated with several health benefits. Spending more time in nature may:

-  **Decrease stress**
-  **Improve mood**
-  **Relieve attention fatigue**
-  **Encourage kindness and generosity**
-  **Motivate more physical activity**

Forest bathing

Forest bathing, or shinrin-yoku, began in Japan. It involves slowly walking through a forest, taking in the atmosphere through all your senses, and enjoying the positive results. The benefits of forest bathing include lowered blood pressure, heart rate, and stress. It can also lead to improved mood and immune function, and better sleep.

The health secrets of trees may have to do with the higher concentration of oxygen that exists in a forest as compared to an urban setting. Simply looking at beautiful natural scenes can help you feel better. Research has shown that patients whose hospital room faced a forest healed faster than those who faced a parking garage. Consider the tips below as you explore nature and soak up the fresh air.

Find a spot. Depending on where you are, find a good source of nature. It can be a forest or any green area such as an urban park, a nature preserve, or a trail through suburban woods.

Engage all your senses. Let nature enter through your ears, eyes, nose, mouth, hands, and feet. Actively listen, smell, touch, and look. Soak in the forest and embrace your sense of joy and calm.



Don't hurry. Slow walking is recommended for beginners. You will most likely notice positive effects after twenty minutes, but a longer visit is better.

Try different activities. Try to do yoga, meditate, journal, or have a picnic in your green area. Go alone or with a companion.

Appreciate the silence. Try to find a wooded area that's free from human-produced sound. Silence is restorative, and a forest can have its own healing sound. Rustling leaves, a trickle of water, or a birdsong can be relaxing.

Sources: [GreaterGood.Berkeley.edu](#)

Additional resources

Watch this [video](#) to learn tips on using nature to enhance your well-being

Check out these [articles](#) to learn more about the benefits of being in nature.

Use this [tool](#) to find nature trails near you.

By clicking on these links, you will be leaving this website and will be directed to third-party sites. These links are provided for informational purposes only.

Outdoor activity bucket list

You can enjoy many outdoor activities close to home to increase your physical activity. Whether you're visiting your favorite public park or spending time in your neighborhood, you have options. Use the list of outdoor activities below as inspiration to get moving this month:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walking, jogging, or hiking | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rollerblading | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biking | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camping | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Golfing | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kayaking or canoeing | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor fitness classes | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor yoga | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Source: [MayoClinic.org](#)