

- Naturopathy / Mental health

## The healing power of nature

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(MC) Being in good health and avoiding various diseases often comes down to a combination of factors. Individuals may be aware that nutrition and exercise play important roles in personal well-being, but it appears that nature may provide its own medicinal benefits as well.



A number of studies have examined the potential healing components of being in nature. The World Health Organization released a report in 2023 titled “Green and Blue Spaces and Mental Health,” which indicated that time in nature improves mood, mindsets and mental health. This occurs regardless of whether that nature was “country” regions or urban areas. The following are some of the ways nature can have a healing effect.

- **Immunity protection:** Trees and plants emit aromatic compounds called phytoncides. When inhaled, these compounds can ignite healthy biological changes similar to the concepts of aromatherapy. When people walk in forests or other green areas, they often experience changes in the blood that are associated with protection against cancer, improved immunity and lower blood pressure, says Dr. Qing Li, a professor at the Nippon Medical School in Tokyo.
  - **Get a brain break:** When spending time in nature, attention is focused on the scenery, the animals and the rest of the environment. This may help quiet the rush of thoughts in the head that clutters the ability to think freely.
  - **Reduce stress:** Stress is a catalyst for a number of adverse health conditions. The Mayo Clinic says stress can cause headache, muscle tension, fatigue, changes in sex drive, and a weaker immune system, among other things. Being outside in nature and away from work and home responsibilities can help reduce stress levels. Dr. Mathew McGlothlin, senior medical director with Wellmed Medical Group, says being in nature provides stress relief.
  - **Get vitamin D:** The body naturally produces vitamin D from sun exposure. The National Institutes of Health says it is optimal to have sun exposure for five to 30 minutes a day, most days a week, to absorb UVB rays and effectively make vitamin D. Vitamin D is a nutrient the body needs to build and maintain strong bones. Vitamin D also regulates many other cellular functions in the body, and may be able to prevent cognitive decline.
  - **Inspires exercise:** People may be more inclined to be physically active while outdoors. Hiking, cycling, swimming, and even strolls in the park all make the outdoors more fun. Exercise promotes heart health and helps people maintain a healthy weight.
- Nature can have a healing effect, and more time outdoors can promote mental and physical well-being.