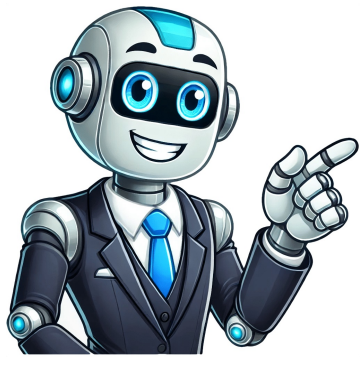


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What is forest bathing

That could be a clearing in the woods surrounded by a bunch of tall trees or a spot where a tree has grown into a curved shape that looks suspiciously like a seat. Reduces your stressYoshifumi Miyazaki, a professor at Chiba University in Japan, has been researching the benefits of forest bathing since 2004 and has found that leisurely forest walks yield a 12.4% decrease in the stress hormone, cortisol, compared with urban walks. "That sensory immersion directs attention away from negative thoughts and promotes a more positive mental state."But that's not all."Forest therapy can have a positive impact on the oxygen levels in your brain," Dr. Albers explains. Spending time in nature releases hormones that relate to the pursuit of joy, connecting to calm and avoiding threats. Wear comfortable clothing and appropriate footwear, such as sneakers or hiking shoes. 1. The idea of shinrin-yoku originated in Japan in 1982. Aim to reduce heart rate Joey Kotfica/Getty Images Your forest bathing session is a good time to sit or walk or do some gentle yoga or tai chi. As a side note, if you can't make it to a forest, Dr. Li says you could get some of the benefits by diffusing tree-based essential oils at home. The most well-known study in this area by Dr Roger Ulrich, an architect specialising in healthcare building design, showed that even a natural view from a window reduced convalescence time by a day, compared to an urban view.Forest bathing is an ancient Japanese process of relaxation - know in Japan as shinrin yoku. Treehugger / Alexandra Cristina Nakamura Forest bathing could not be more simple or accessible. Sunny weather is ideal for forest bathing, though shinrin-yoku can still be practiced in cloudy or rainy weather. What is forest bathing? "You can also get beneficial effects from a city park," says Li, but they won't be as significant as walking in the deep woods. It reported that shinrin-yoku had a positive impact on blood pressure and adiponectin, a protein that helps regulate blood sugar levels. They expect the number to balloon to about 70% by 2050. You can enjoy forest bathing, through Forest Holidays at:"The experience lasts for three hours and includes a guided walk through the forest, with invitations to open your senses to the world around you." Do you suggest doing it alone or with a buddy? Another study published in 2022 found that it can significantly improve mood and reduce stress, compared to walking in an urban gray setting. Follow your nose. It doesn't matter if you don't get anywhere. There is a moment of awe that washes over you when you step into a forest. It's based on three different traditional concepts: yūgen, komorebi and wabi sabi.Yūgen is about being so keenly aware of the beauty of the world around you that the deep emotions you feel can't be expressed with words.Komorebi literally translates to "sunlight leaking through trees." It describes the relationship, or interplay, between the sun and the leaves.Wabi sabi celebrates the beauty of imperfection and impermanence."The intent of forest bathing is to put people in touch with present-moment experience in a very deep way," explains clinical psychologist Susan Albers, PsyD. The digital story was edited by Malaka Gharib. Spruce up your space by:Opening up your windows. We are leading the way in the UK, as the only holiday company whose team members have undergone extensive training with The Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides. The term arose from the Japanese Forest Agency as a way to attract more visitors to Japanese forests. "If you never play the piano after that, the lesson doesn't make much difference."Ideally, you should be immersed in nature for a few hours at a time, but even 15 minutes could make a difference. If you exert yourself too much physically, your "tiredness will reduce the effect of forest bathing," says Li. Your body will produce more stress hormones such as adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol, which studies have shown that forest bathing can help decrease. The longer has more effect." A 2019 study published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health found that walking just 15 minutes through the woods can help relieve stress and anxiety. Breathe in the scents of the forest Many of the benefits of shinrin-yoku come when we inhale the chemicals that trees release into the air, called phytoncides, says Li. They can reduce our stress hormones and increase our levels of white-blood cells known as natural killer cells, according to his research. We guide you to enjoy a forest bathing activity that uses mindfulness and meditation techniques to allow you to open your senses to the natural world. So, if you think you'd enjoy it, you should try it!Forest bathing when far from natureAccording to the World Bank, about 56% of the world's population currently lives in urban areas. Some studies have had participants take two 40-minute walks once a week, while others had participants go on a 20-minute walk every day. But here's the thing: It doesn't really matter. Now sit down, says Evans, and try this exercise. But if you live far away from one or don't have the means to get there, any place that has a lot of trees and quiet spaces will do. Frees up your creativityIn one study by David Strayer, a psychology professor at the University of Utah, participants saw a 50% improvement in creative problem solving after three days immersed in nature with all access to modern technology removed.4. Boost your immune systemTrees and plants emit 'phytoncides' which we breathe in when we spend time in the forest. Walking in an urban park still has health benefits. "This is not exercise or hiking or jogging," he writes in his 2018 book Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness. The term refers simply to immersing yourself in the atmosphere of the forest.But forest therapy is more than just a meander through the woods. 5. Trained forest therapy guides help participants engage in activities that help them experience the natural environment with all of their senses.Walking through forests isn't a new practice, but the concept of shinrin-yoku is. 3. 2. Our brains have been worrying and ruminating and overthinking for many years."See the forest AND the treesDr. Albers says forest therapy is a great way to get started with mindfulness."Make mindfulness one of your daily habits," she encourages.Take the time to breathe deeply and turn your focus inward. One 2007 study showed that forest therapy reduces cortisol, a stress hormone. Then keep that going." "When the exhale is slower than the inhale, it sends a physiological message to your body that says: 'I'm safe. Where can you go forest bathing? You may be surprised by what you discover, says Evans. And take your time. Whatever you feel most comfortable with." Sally Anscombe/Getty Images6 HEALTH BENEFITS OF FOREST BATHING1. Bolster your forest bath with meditation Dougal Waters/Getty Images When you get to the forest or the park, walk a little bit and then find a spot that speaks to you. Many people enjoy spending time in nature. But a more recent study casts doubt on some of those findings. They defined the practice as "taking in the forest atmosphere or forest bathing." People forest bathe to lower stress and reconnect with nature. Li and Gary Evans, director of the Forest Bathing Institute in the U.K., talk to Life Kit about the science behind forest bathing and how you can reap these health benefits. It found that forest bathing didn't necessarily have an impact on blood pressure, but it did reduce depression in a significant way.Taken together, the science on forest bathing makes a convincing argument that spending time communing with nature can improve stress, anxiety and depression.That doesn't surprise Dr. Albers. 5. Forest bathing is a sensory practice where you "bathe" your senses with natural stimulation from the forest or other nature setting. These have been proven in studies by Qing Li, a Japanese shinrin yoku researcher, to enhance the activity of specific cells that help our bodies to fight disease. Possibly without knowing it, you participated in the popular Japanese wellness activity of forest bathing, or shinrin-yoku, as it is traditionally known. It may be good for your body, too.Shirin-yoku has only been around for about four decades, so it hasn't been particularly well-researched. Still, the research that we do have is quite promising.Let's take a look. While it might not give you the exact same feeling as you'd get tramping through the wilderness, studies suggest walking in an urban park can improve your mood, your heart rate variability and even your memory.If you don't have access to green space at all — or if you just can't get enough of that forest feeling — try bringing the outside in. If you do decide to try out a grounding mat, read the directions carefully, and check it before each use to ensure it's safe to operate.How to do itAlthough the occasional forest therapy outing may help you unwind for a few hours, you need to engage in forest therapy regularly to really reap the benefits."It's like taking a piano lesson," Dr. Albers says. "Spending more time outdoors in the natural world is a fantastic way to achieve this and forest bathing is a powerful antidote to the pressures of the modern world, proven to deliver lasting benefits to both physical and mental wellbeing and create a profound connection to nature."Where are the best places in the UK to do it?You can essentially go forest bathing in any forest or wooded area, but you can also join organised trips. There are very few places in the UK where you can experience it authentically with a qualified forest therapist. But did you know that time among the trees could be therapeutic? Set aside a good chunk of time To reap the ultimate rewards of shinrin-yoku, plan to spend two to six hours in the woods, says Li. His research showed that forest bathing for about that amount of time helped boost immunity. Treehugger / Alexandra Cristina Nakamura Adults and children can take part in this nature therapy. "And the pleasant aromas of nature can have a positive impact on mood and emotional well-being." In other words, forest therapy is also aromatherapy. "Either is absolutely fine. The study's results clarified the physiological and psychological effects of forest bathing and presented useful applications for clinical use. It's only been around since 1982. "As you breathe in the fresh air within a forest, you're inhaling oxygen-rich air, which can support proper oxygenation of your blood and subsequently benefit your brain function."Forests are also chock full of phytoncides, which are antimicrobial compounds released by trees and plants."Inhaling these compounds during forest therapy sessions may benefit the immune system and contribute to stress reduction," Dr. Albers says. Century-old trees tower above, sunlight twinkling through them. Add the mental health benefits of walking to this cocktail, and you've got a recipe for better mental and physical health on your hands.But chances are you won't see doctors endorsing forest therapy as a cure for physical or mental health concerns any time soon. But the health benefits won't be as significant, says Li. "The longer [the time in the forest], the better. Improves your moodAcademics at Derby University have conducted a meta study of existing research which concludes that connecting to nature can be linked to happiness and mental wellbeing. Enthusiasts say it can help you relax and refuel — and give you a break from the devices, worries and stress that dominate your daily life. Just being in a forest can help to reduce anxiety and boost the immune system, but forest bathing goes even further to become an immersive experience that can have far-reaching benefits."It's not just a guided walk in the woods because our forest bathing experience takes you to a different level of sensory awareness. Forest bathing is about calming down your nervous system and reducing your heart rate and blood pressure. If that's not doable, Dr. Albers suggests finding ways to make other mindfulness practices a part of your daily life."You can take the forest therapy experience and then form a brief five-minute practice every day," she says.Try the following practice:Sit comfortably and notice your breath.Notice anything that takes you away from the awareness of your breath — whether it's a sound, a thought or a sensation.If you do notice something else, see if you can notice that you got engaged with something other than your breath. 2. A recent meta study in Japan reviewed 20 trials, involving 732 participants, which demonstrated that blood pressure levels in the forest environment were significantly lower than those in the non-forest environment. Forest bathing has emerged as a viable therapy option for people experiencing anxiety, depression, and other mental health stressors. Birds tweet. And why is it so good for our health? (A 2009 study showed that simply being immersed in the scents of the forest may have a positive impact on your health.)Adding a few rocks, shells, pinecones or crystals to your décor.Listening to recordings of forest sounds.Walk outside barefoot, and physically connect with the earth.While the jury's still out on their effectiveness, you might also want to consider trying a grounding mat. She recommends the following steps when forest bathing: unplug, go slow, use your senses, think less and feel more, give back, and repeat. If you live in a big city and can't easily get to a proper forest, Dr. Albers recommends going to your local park or green space. A 2022 study published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health found that walking in a forest park had a greater impact on cardiovascular function than doing so in an urban park. Forest therapy is a growing practice that promises benefits for your mind and body. Click here to subscribe now. While forest bathing is best done alone, you can go with a partner or group if conversation is kept to a minimum. Clear your mind and focus on the here and now, instead of what is going on at work or at home. One study found that participants who walked in the forest for two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon saw an increase in anti-cancer proteins and immune cells that kill tumors, with the effects lasting for at least seven days after. The people staying in those rooms saw about 40 to 50% of the health benefits as those who did a forest bathing session. Have you ever taken a walk through nature without any distractions? Listen to where it wants to take you. The result: Plants absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen into the air. "The forest has higher oxygen levels compared to urban or indoor environments," she continues. It's worth it — even if you can only spare a few minutes. I can relax. The actual length of the walk can vary depending on your preference and physical abilities. In recent months, the Japanese practice of shinrin yoku, or forest bathing has really taken off in the UK. Breathe deeply and observe the forest around you: move slowly and deliberately: touch the trees and flowers as you pass; pause when you desire to take in the full effect of the forest. 3. This story was originally published on August 24, 2023 and has been updated to include a rerun of the podcast episode. You are going to be walking aimlessly and slowly. 4. Stick to marked trails, pay attention to your surroundings, and be prepared with sunscreen, allergy medication, and insect repellent if needed. If it feels beautiful and resonant to you, that's what matters. It's not the time to squeeze in your hardcore cardio for the week. Want more Life Kit? The reason to do it in the forest is to allow yourself to relax so you can begin to notice all the sounds, colors and textures that nature has to offer. Let your body be your guide. The practice offers several health benefits and has gained popularity as a form of therapy after several studies proved the efficacy of shinrin-yoku. Reduces high blood pressureForest bathing has been proven to reduce blood pressure, a crucial factor in maintaining a healthy heart. Enjoying a few hours soaking in nature isn't going to hurt you, and there's a decent chance it could help. It's OK." he adds. "It is simply being in nature, connecting with the forest, you can also do shorter walks. Subscribe to our weekly newsletter and get expert advice on topics like money, relationships, health and more. The simple method of being calm and quiet amongst the trees, ... Learn the basics of 'shinrin-yoku', or forest bathing, and discover how slowing down while immersed in nature can help reduce blood pressure and stress levels. The smell of pine needles fill the air. All that is required is a short walk through nature without any distractions (put your phone away!). According to the researchers, the inspiration one feels when surrounded by nature creates a sense of safety and security that can decrease stress levels and promote relaxation."Depending on what's happening in your emotional world, quite often when we look at nature or the forest, it sends something back to us to help us make sense of what's going on in our life." This episode of Life Kit was produced by Clare Marie Schneider. If you can, get yourself outside among the trees. Leave your screens, your deadlines and your worries behind. Research conducted in 2010 found that people who walked in the forest twice a day for two hours (so, four hours of walking a day) had greater levels of cancer-killing proteins and immune cells.In 2011, yet another study found that forest therapy was beneficial. They discovered a "significant positive correlation between nature, mindfulness, and measures of psychological well-being" when practicing forest bathing. Accelerates your recovery from illnessNature can be a powerful catalyst in the recovery process. "Forest therapy engages multiple senses," she notes. Most researchers conducting studies on the topic say there simply isn't enough data to come to any firm conclusions. You are not going anywhere. View full post on InstagramCountryliving.com/uk interviewed David Read, Forest Therapy Guide at Forest Holidays.What is forest bathing?"Forest bathing is a natural wellbeing therapy that utilises the healing power of the forest. 6. You are savouring the sounds, smells and sights of nature and letting the forest in."View full post on InstagramWhy is forest bathing rising in popularity?"We believe it's due to people realising how disconnected they have become from the natural world and wanting to rectify that. It can also reduce the stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline and turn down the dial on your body's fight-or-flight response. "The difference between normal activities and forest bathing is that we're going to move very slowly," says Evans. It raises an important question: Are there ways for people to take advantage of forest bathing outside of forests?At least right now, the answer is: Sort of.A 2022 study indicates that location does matter: It found that walking in an actual forest had a greater effect on cardiovascular health than walking in a city park.But when it comes to grounding yourself, something is always better than nothing. To us, it sounds relaxing, swamped in nature and right up our street (sorry, wooded lane), so we want to find out more about it. You don't need any devices. The minimum recommended duration of a forest bath is 20 minutes. That's because you're surrounded by trees and vegetation that engage in photosynthesis. In one study from 2009, his team ordered special concentrated essential oils made from Japanese cypress trees and then pumped them into the hotel rooms of test subjects using a diffuser. According to Phyllis Look, certified forest therapy guide with the award-winning Forest Bathing Hawai'i, a slow, gentle walk or a moment of quiet observation can help deepen your connection with nature. Combined, these experiences work to deliver a stress-reducing therapy that improves physical health as well as psychological well-being. The visual producer is Kaz Fantone. Treehugger / Alexandra Cristina Nakamura In a 2020 study published by the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, researchers reviewed forest bathing as an approach to improving mindfulness and psychological well-being in participants. "There is a growing understanding that, although technology enhances our lives in many ways, we need to switch off from it regularly. A study published in the Journal Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine compared a group of male subjects taking day trips in a forest park to a group put in an urban environment. Over time, we have become more and more urbanised and intertwined with technology. It might even improve your physical health.What is forest bathing?Forest therapy is rooted in the Japanese practice of shinrin-yoku, which is often translated as "forest bathing." But it's not a literal bath. Keep safety in mind when practicing shinrin-yoku. The experience can be transformative."What are the optimum conditions for forest bathing?"Dr Qing Li encapsulates this beautifully in his recent book The Art and Science of Forest Bathing (£8.52, Amazon):"Make sure you have left your phone and camera behind. "The sights, sounds and smells of the forest take us right into that moment, so our brains stop anticipating, recalling, ruminating and worrying."If you think that sounds like mindfulness, you're right. "Mindfulness is the practice of being in the present moment with intention, without judging," Dr. Albers adds. It's an electrified mat that you stand, sit or lie on to — in theory — reconnect your electric current with the earth's. Go to a nature trail or an urban park if you do not have access to a preserve. Participants in his studies have also anecdotally reported better moods and lower anxiety. It can boost your immune system, lower blood pressure and help with depression. But it's possible that time in the great outdoors could boost more than just your mental health. "We are delighted to see a growing interest in forest bathing and using the forest for health and wellbeing," says Josephine Lavelle, head of marketing for the Forestry Commission."As the biggest landowner in Britain, our forests are less than an hour's drive from 99% of the English population."Sounds good to us. The evidence that it can improve your physical health is shaky at best. Find a location where you're surrounded by trees Santiago Urquijo/Getty Images The ideal place to forest bathe is well, in a forest. The forest air is cleaner than urban developments and the trees themselves contain phytoncides, antimicrobial organic compounds derived from plants known for a host of benefits, including boosting immune cells.

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