

THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF SPENDING TIME OUTSIDE

HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND OUTSIDE?

1. Think about your typical day. How often do you get outside?
 - a) 0 minutes per day
 - b) 5-10 minutes per day
 - c) 10-30 minutes per day
 - d) 30 or more
2. How do you feel after a day at the beach, a hike in the woods, or even a short walk?

Chances are, you've never come back in a worse mood – only better!

Despite the many benefits of nature, most of us live an indoor lifestyle. The average American spends 93% of their time indoors! Reconnecting with the outdoors can have a powerful impact on both our physical and mental well-being.

PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF BEING OUTDOORS

Studies have shown multiple benefits, including:

- **Vitamin D boost** - Critical for bone health, immunity, and mood.
- **Improved overall health** - UK research found that just 120 minutes outside per week was linked to significant health improvements.
- **Better sleep** - Natural light helps regulate your circadian rhythm.
- **Increased physical activity** - Time outside encourages natural movement.
- **Anti-inflammatory effects** - Spending time in nature can lower inflammation markers, and the risk of chronic conditions including diabetes and heart disease.
- **Faster healing** - Patients with views of nature heal faster, require less pain medication, and have shorter hospital stays.

MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF BEING OUTDOORS

Hundreds of scientific studies have demonstrated the mental health benefits of spending more time in nature for both children and adults.

- **Lower anxiety** - Being outdoors promotes calm and improves mood.
- **Increased feelings of awe and gratitude**
- **Sharper thinking** - Regular outdoor time improves cognitive function and creativity.

STRATEGIES TO INCREASE TIME IN NATURE

At home

- Bookend your days with morning and evening walks.
- Raise the shades, bring the light in!
- Open the windows for a little fresh air.
- Sit by window and enjoy the view.
- Get a bird feeder and see who stops by!
- Bring the outdoors in with houseplants.
- Dine al fresco.
- Take your workout outside.
- Tackle outdoor chores like weeding, raking, mowing, and gardening.
- Take a meeting or phone call outside.
- Do a mindfulness or breath work exercise outside.
- Journal or read outside.

Away from home

- Visit a local park.
- Join a community garden.
- Participate in a community clean up.
- Go for a bike ride.
- Walk along a river, canal, or city trail.
- Plan a hiking day trip.

- Seek out outdoor events like concerts, markets, and outdoor plays.
- Visit a local botanical garden or arboretum.
- Plan a park picnic with friends.
- Be an amateur naturalist – there are many apps that allow users to identify everything from plants, to birds, to stars.
- Start a nature journal, record your findings.
- Try your hand at nature photography.
- Take a self-guided audio tour of a city or historical area.
- Re-think your commute! Are there any places you can get to via foot, bicycle, or scooter instead of a car or public transit?
- Try geocaching – follow GPS coordinates to thousands of hidden caches in urban and rural areas.
- Watch the clouds.
- Create a nature mandala using leaves, twigs, rocks, shells, flowers, and other objects.
- Go camping or glamping.
- Hit the water! Rent a canoe, kayak, or paddleboard.
- Get hands-on with your groceries – pick your own produce at a you-pick farm!
- Toss a frisbee or play a game of catch.
- Join a walking or hiking club