



WHAT IS FOREST BATHING?

Forest bathing is the practice of taking in the forest – or any natural, outside environment – through all of the senses. But it’s more than just soaking up the outside world; it’s also about being mindful and interacting with your natural surroundings – the sites, sounds, smells, and textures – to absorb the scientifically proven benefits of spending quiet time in nature.

The concept of forest bathing originated in the 1980s in Japan, where it’s known as shinrin-yoku. According to Harvard Medical School , tech and industrial workers in Japan at the time were showing an increase in stress-related illnesses, which triggered leaders to create nature trails to entice people outside. Benefits ensued, including reduced stress, improved attention spans, boosted immune systems, and overall better moods.

WHY FOREST BATHE?

Less stress. A sense of wonder. Experiencing natural beauty. Lowered blood pressure and a stronger immune system.

All of these benefits – and more – have been linked to forest bathing. Many of the positives may be anecdotal or subjective, but in recent years, scientific studies have shown that forest bathing actually makes measurable positive impacts. For example, higher stress means higher levels of cortisol, a hormone that can play a role in high blood pressure, heart disease, headaches, and other illnesses. Tests have shown that a calm walk in the woods reduces cortisol levels.

Another study in Japan showed that people who spent two nights and three days in a forest had an increase in the number and activity of certain immune cells that fight viruses and even cancer. People who spent the same amount of time in an urban setting didn’t enjoy the same kinds of benefits.

Additionally, according to the National Library of Medicine , trees emit natural oils called phytoncides that have been proven to enhance the immune system, lower blood pressure, ward off depression and help cut anxiety.

