

The UConn Buzz



Forest Therapy

In the 1980s the Japanese government noted an increase in stressed related illnesses. Leaders felt this was a national health crisis that needed to be addressed. One of the ways to address this crisis was the introduction of *shinrin-yoku*: forest bathing. Forest therapy has evolved from forest bathing. " Unlike a hike or guided nature walk aimed at identifying trees or birds, forest therapy relies on trained guides, who set a deliberately slow pace and invites people to experience the pleasures of nature through all the senses". ([Harvard Health](#))

How Does it Work?

According to a study done by [Dr. Li](#) Forest walking improved nocturnal sleep conditions for individuals with sleep complaints, possibly as a result of exercise and emotional improvement. Furthermore, extension of sleep duration was greater after an afternoon walk compared to a forenoon walk “

There are a number of health benefits to being out in the forest. These benefits include: lowering blood pres-

sure, reducing anxiety and depression. Studies have also shown that forest bathing can boost the immune system. [A study published in 2009](#) shows an increase in immune markers such as the natural killer cells up to 30 days post forest exposure. Individuals may need as little as 20 minutes to reap the benefits.

The [benefits](#) of exposure to nature and forests specifically come from the release of chemicals called phytoncides. It is these phytoncides that increase the body's production of natural killers cells (NKC). NKC are important parts of the immune response to fighting infection.

Exposure to phytoncides also increase the production of anti-cancer proteins in the body and also the release of hormones to reduce blood pressure, decrease heart rate, decrease anxiety and depression.

Even people who are unable to get out in nature can also gain benefits from nature by sitting near a window. [A study](#) on bedbound patients saw improvement in recovery from having a view of a natural setting.

How to get started

Allow yourself 20-60 minutes of time for the experience. Reduce any distractions such as a cellphone. Find a spot surrounded by nature.

- Walk slowly or sit quietly.
- Allow your senses to experience the surroundings.
- Breathe deeply and slowly taking in the natural environment.
- Repeat these steps as time allows.
- When you are ready to end the session. Take one last cleansing breath reflect on you feel. Enjoy the rest of your day.

University of Washington's, [Self-Guided Forest Bathing](#)

Sources: [CDC](#), Harvard Health, National Public Radio, USDA Forest Service, and NIH



This Month's Question:

What is the largest barrier to your spending more time outside?

[survey](#)

HAPPENINGS AROUND TOWN

[John E. Jackman Tour de Mansfield](#), June 4, 2022, Mansfield, CT The 17th Annual John E. Jackman Tour de Mansfield will feature two routes, a 20-mile and a 40-mile route, both of which begin and end at the Mansfield Community Center (10 S. Eagleville Road). Cyclists are welcome to choose the route which best fits their comfort level. Following the ride, everyone is invited to enjoy lunch together outside of the Community Center. Lunch is included with registration.

[Eversource Walk for Kids](#), June 12, in-person in Boston, or anywhere you would like. Join in for the Eversource Walk for Boston Children's Hospital. Register for free by Friday, June 10. On Sunday, June 12, either in-person at the DCR Hatch Shell in Boston or anywhere you'd like, we'll walk and celebrate your impact for kids. **All registered walkers who raise \$150 will receive a Walk t-shirt to wear proudly on Walk Day.**

[Pirate Fest!](#), August 20, 10-12:30; Free tours 2-7pm New London, CT. Ahoy land lubbers! Save the date for our new community event to celebrate the lore of Captain Kidd and the fun of playing pirate. Come in costume and enjoy Kalmar Nyckel ship tours, pirate crafts, and cannon demonstrations. Dress like a pirate and join us on the New London Waterfront park for some fun. Don't forget the sunscreen!

Summer is blueberry, strawberry, & raspberry season in CT! Get out and [Pick-Your Own](#), at one of these local farms.

A Simple Mexican Salad

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients

- ◆ 2 cucumbers
- ◆ 8 oranges
- ◆ 1 lemon or lime
- ◆ 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- ◆ 1/2 teaspoon of salt



Directions

1. Wash the cucumbers, oranges and lemon or lime under cold running water.
2. Slice the cucumbers. Peel and cut the oranges into small pieces.
3. Place cucumber slices and orange pieces in a medium size bowl. Add chili powder, lemon or lime juice and salt. ENJOY!



Seasonal Allergies

Due to the windy and warm weather we've had this year many will experience symptoms of seasonal allergies much earlier this year. Pollen levels are highest in the morning so scheduling your outdoor time in the evenings may help. Additionally, avoiding eye-hand contact, keeping your windows shut, and taking your shoes off inside may help reduce symptoms.

Allergies arise when the body's immune system overreacts to substances

that are normally harmless. When a person with allergies breathes in allergens—such as pollen, mold, pet dander, or dust mites—the resulting allergic reactions in the nose are called allergic rhinitis, or hay fever.

One way to reduce your problem with outdoor allergies is to wear a facemask. There was a noted reduction in the number of people suffering from seasonal allergies during periods of increased mask wearing to protect against COVID-19. Pollen molecules are larg-

er than the Covid-19 virus molecule and therefore most any mask including cloth will greatly reduce the amount of pollen you breath in. Studies done with nurses in Israel showed a reduction in symptoms reported by many of the nurses even those with severe allergy symptoms. ([New York Times](#))

[Learn more here!](#)

Be Well is an employee wellness program provided through the Eastern Highlands Health District with funding from The CT Department of Health. The goal of the program is to make the healthy choice.

