

# Prescribing nature for mental, physical health

August 18 2022, by Jason Howland

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Credit: Mayo Clinic

Eating right and exercising are important ways to stay mentally and physically healthy. And instead of getting off the couch and hopping on a treadmill, you might want to consider going outdoors and reaping the health benefits of being in nature.

And don't be surprised at your next doctor's visit when you get a prescription for parks instead of pills.

Being outdoors in nature is an important factor in staying healthy. It's a concept called biophilia.

"Biophilia means that we are wired to be connected to nature—that there's something healthy about having nature either in our presence or us being present in nature," says Dr. Brent Bauer, a general internal medicine physician at Mayo Clinic.

"There's actually a lot of research on this topic. So it's no longer just, 'Nature sounds good.' We know it's actually really good. Those studies range from evaluating people who are in a city and then taken into a forest. What happens to [blood pressure](#)? What happens to [heart rate](#)? And in many, many studies, we do much better in the natural environment."

Which is why some health care professionals are writing "park prescriptions."

"It's kind of, I think, heightening the importance of getting out into nature. More than just saying we should. Now we actually have a prescription," says Dr. Bauer.

Studies suggest the best dose of nature is at least two hours a week. And if you can't get outside, bring the nature indoors.

"There's still plenty of benefits to listening to bird songs, listening to nature sounds, having a water fountain—just having elements around you that are made of stone and wood," says Dr. Bauer.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

Citation: Prescribing nature for mental, physical health (2022, August 18) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-08-nature-mental-physical-health.html>

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