

HEALTH HUB
MARCH 2026



NATURE IS
NUTURING

FOR YOUR MIND
AND BODY

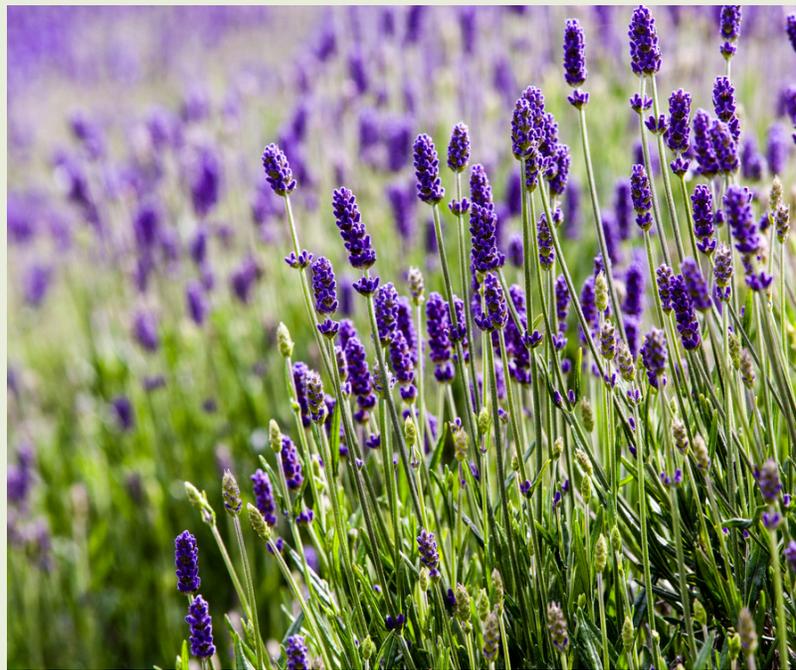
Nurture Your Mind and Body by Stepping Outside

We've all been a little cooped up after a long winter, and March is the perfect month to change that. As a true "shoulder season," March gives us the best of both worlds —the chance to still enjoy winter activities while catching those first, hopeful signs of spring. Did you know you can boost your mood just by walking in nature, even in urban nature.

Fresh Air

You might notice bulbs starting to pop up, longer daylight hours, or maybe even that first 60-degree day that makes it feel downright joyful to be outside again. Whether it's walking in the park, riding your bike, playing pickleball, or starting some light yard clean-up, this is a great time to reconnect with the outdoors.

March invites us to stretch, breathe, and reset. So bundle up if needed, soak up a little sunshine when it appears, and enjoy this seasonal transition — your mind and body will thank you



Written By:
Laura Ross,
MPH

Laura is a health educator with a passion for wellness. When she's not teaching or learning about health, you'll find her outdoors, soaking up nature. Her favorite outdoor activity lately is playing at the park with her granddaughter.

Why Getting Outside Matters

Spending time outdoors offers powerful benefits for both your mind and body

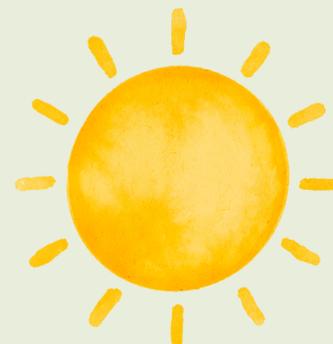
Boosts mood and reduces stress

Increases energy and focus

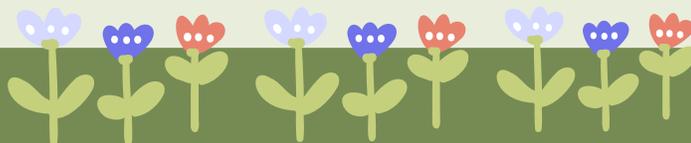
Supports physical activity and heart health

Improves sleep and overall well-being

Relieves symptoms of depression and anxiety



Lowers cortisol levels, reduces blood pressure, and strengthens immune function



Take a Deep Breath!

Why does nature feel so restorative? One explanation is that access to natural environments—whether by living nearby or simply seeing them—helps lower stress. In research conducted by Catharine Ward Thompson and her colleagues, individuals residing near larger green spaces reported lower stress levels and experienced greater decreases in cortisol throughout the day.

Another study found that participants who watched a one-minute video depicting awe-inspiring natural scenes, rather than a happiness-inducing clip, were more likely to feel they had sufficient time to accomplish their tasks and less likely to feel that their lives were “slipping away.” Additional research shows that people who frequently experience awe, wonder, and appreciation for natural beauty tend to have lower levels of interleukin-6 (IL-6), a biomarker associated with cardiovascular disease, depression, and autoimmune disorders.

Although this field of study is not as extensively developed as others, the findings so far are encouraging. An early investigation by Roger Ulrich, for instance, revealed that patients recovered more quickly from cardiovascular surgery when their hospital rooms overlooked natural scenery.

More recently, a review examining various forms of nature exposure—such as walking through natural landscapes, viewing nature from a window, watching images or videos, and encountering plants and animals at home or work—concluded that these experiences reduce stress, support faster healing, enhance physical health among older adults, and promote behaviors that improve mood and overall well-being.

(What happens when we reconnect with nature 2017)



Simple Ways to Get Outside This Month

Take a lunch break walk when the weather allows

Try a winter activity one last time or ease into spring movement

Get your hands in the dirt with early yard or garden prep

Go on a hike in the foothills

Take a bike ride with family or friends



Have you considered taking a walking meeting? Walking meetings are a great way to get outside while at work. Here are some tips to help you get started.

Select a safe, quiet, accessible route with the desired distance

Consider different fitness levels and abilities when choosing a route

Check the weather, and have a backup plan if needed, such as walking inside

Advise participants to wear comfortable clothing and shoes suitable for walking

Consider inviting participants to walk side-by-side to foster communication

Schedule walking meetings during times when energy levels are typically low, like mid-afternoon

Encourage participants to bring a water bottle to stay hydrated

If you need a little more motivation,
here are a couple of
great resources
to help you get started!



EVERY KID OUTDOORS **ADVENTURE CHALLENGE**

DNR Department of Outdoor Recreation
Every Kid Outdoors Program



March into May: National Park
Edition

Sources

Kristophe Greene & Keltner, D. K. U. B. D. (n.d.). What happens when we reconnect with nature. Greater Good. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_happens_when_we_reconnect_with_nature