



# International Self-Care Day - Nature as Healer

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July 24 marks **International Self-Care Day**, a global reminder that looking after our health isn't just something we do once in a while but something we can prioritise 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It's an opportunity to reflect on simple, evidence-backed ways to support our wellbeing, from spending more time in nature to practising mindfulness. Together, these everyday habits form the foundation of self-care and can help protect both mental and physical health over the long term.

## Nature and mindfulness as self-care

A recent systematic review and meta-analysis, published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, combined results from 25 trials involving nearly 3,000 participants.<sup>1</sup> The study found that nature-based mindfulness interventions, such as mindful walking or meditation in forests and parks, may provide beneficial effects to mental health.

### Moderate overall benefits

Across all studies, mindfulness interventions in natural settings led to a **medium overall effect size**.

### Social and physical outcomes

Interventions also showed small improvements in social and physical health; benefits were generally maintained over time.



### Type of setting matters

Interventions conducted in wild or forest environments may be more beneficial compared to garden or park environments, although the differences were not significant.

### Mindfulness style influences results

Informal mindfulness practices, like simply paying attention in the moment, had larger, though not statistically significant, benefits than formal meditation-based approaches.

### Impact

The clearest evidence was for **psychological health**, with interventions boosting overall well-being and mood. Importantly, these improvements weren't just short-lived; follow-up assessments showed that the positive impacts on mental and physical health tended to last over time, suggesting that mindfulness practices in natural settings can produce meaningful, sustained benefits for overall quality of life.

### Author's comments

This review only included 25 studies, each with different types of participants and interventions, therefore its findings can't be easily generalised. Many subgroup findings did not achieve robust statistical significance, largely due to small sample sizes and limited studies. These promising trends should therefore be viewed cautiously until validated by stronger evidence. Despite this, the evidence still supports that spending time outside in nature is broadly helpful and beneficial for overall well-being.

1. Djernis D, Lerstrup I, Poulsen D, Stigsdotter U, Dahlgaard J, O'Toole M. A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Nature-Based Mindfulness: Effects of Moving Mindfulness Training into an Outdoor Natural Setting. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2019 Sep 2;16(17):3202. doi: 10.3390/ijerph16173202. PMID: 31480748; PMCID: PMC6747393.