



Health Tip

Let's go forest bathing

It's cool, there's an earthy smell, and you're surrounded by rustling, humming and twittering – can you hear it? Of course you can! In the nearest forest. Such immersion in nature and conscious interaction with the forest even has a name: forest bathing. The term originated in Japan, where *shinrin-yoku* is regarded as one of the most effective stress reduction methods, enabling one to relax, leave one's hectic everyday life behind and focus completely on the here and now – while at the same time benefiting from being outdoors in the fresh air.

If you are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to go to a wooded area during your lunch break, you should definitely do so. Everyone else can go and explore their nearest forest or woodland after work or at the weekend. We are not talking about arduous hikes or power walking – instead, you should consciously try to take in the forest, to “bathe” in it. Sounds strange? It's really quite simple:

Forest bathing – the ‘how to’ guide

Walk through the forest slowly and let your senses perceive everything around you. How does the ground feel? Is it soft, stony, covered in roots? What do you see? Leaves fluttering in the wind, moss, ants? What do you hear? Cracking, rustling, humming, the chirping of birds? What does it smell like, do you feel the fresh air on your skin and in your lungs?

Walk at a leisurely pace, stop, sit down on a tree stump – whatever you feel like. The main thing is that you take your time! Slowing down cannot be done in a rush. Close your eyes, deeply inhale and exhale, feel and sense only what is surrounding you at this precise moment.

Forest bathing – the real deal

If you consciously commit to this experience of nature, you will be rewarded with relaxation and inner peace. Woodland grounds us. You can leave the stress of everyday life at the edge of the forest. Apart from aiding mental recuperation, forest bathing is also beneficial for our physical health. Scientific studies have shown that going for regular walks in nature has a positive effect on blood pressure, body fat percentage and cholesterol level. You can thus go back to your working life fortified.

Not much time?

No problem. While forest bathing is most effective when done without time pressure, we can still benefit from the positive energy of the forest when we only do it for a short time. A University of Michigan study shows that stress levels are reduced even if you only spend between 20 and 30 minutes outdoors in nature as a conscious decision. It is often possible to fit this into even the busiest work week.