

Hello!

July is here, and with summer in full swing, there's no better time to embrace the healing power of **nature and sunshine**—two of the most underutilized tools in our wellness toolkit.

In functional medicine, we're discovering that our relationship with the natural world and sunlight exposure goes far beyond just feeling good. Research is revealing profound connections between time outdoors, sun exposure, and our immune system, inflammation levels, and overall health.

This month, let's explore how to harness these natural healing forces that have been with us throughout history—and learn practical ways to bring more nature and sunshine into your daily wellness routine!

In the News

Sunlight Shows Promise as Treatment for Autoimmune Diseases

Groundbreaking research is revealing that **ultraviolet (UV) light therapy** may offer hope for treating autoimmune diseases like multiple sclerosis (MS), type 1 diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis. ☀️

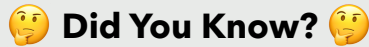
Scientists have discovered that UV light has a surprising ability to **calm an overactive immune system**. In a small clinical trial, patients with early-stage MS who received UV light therapy showed dramatic improvements: their inflammatory protein levels dropped within a week, and disease severity scores fell 13% while the control group's scores rose 14%.

Even more remarkable? **A year later, all subjects who didn't receive UV therapy had developed full-blown MS, but 30% of the UV group had been spared.**

The research reveals that autoimmune diseases follow a striking **latitude gradient**—rates are nearly zero near the equator and increase dramatically toward the poles. For MS specifically, prevalence increases by an average of 3.64 cases per 100,000 people for each degree of latitude.

This isn't just about vitamin D. When researchers exposed the skin to UV light, they discovered a "microscopic pharmacopeia" of beneficial compounds including melatonin, serotonin, endorphins, nitric oxide, and novel anti-inflammatory molecules that help reset the immune system to a more balanced state. 🍹

While more research is needed, this opens exciting possibilities for harnessing sunlight's healing power in treating some of our most challenging health conditions.



"Grounding" Can Reduce Inflammation in Your Body

Here's something that might sound too simple to be true: **direct skin contact with the Earth's surface** can significantly reduce inflammation throughout your body.

Research published in the Journal of Inflammation Research found that "grounding" or "earthing"—walking barefoot, lying on the ground, or using grounding mats—provides free electrons from the Earth's surface that act as **natural antioxidants**.

The study showed remarkable results:

- ✨ Pain reduction within hours of grounding
- ✨ 80-90% improvement in chronic inflammation markers
- ✨ Faster wound healing and reduced swelling
- ✨ Better sleep and normalized cortisol rhythms
- ✨ Improved immune function and reduced stress hormones

Modern life—with rubber-soled shoes, elevated beds, and indoor living—has disconnected us from this natural "battery" that our ancestors accessed daily. Our immune systems were designed to need this constant flow of Earth's electrons, and without it, we may be more vulnerable to inflammatory conditions.

The good news is that just 30 minutes of direct contact with the Earth can begin to restore this natural balance. Even medical infrared imaging shows inflammation reduction within 30 minutes of grounding! 🌍



Your Nature Prescription: Small Doses, Big Benefits

Want to tap into nature's healing power without overhauling your life? Research shows that **even small amounts of nature exposure** can provide significant health benefits.

Finnish researchers found that just **5 hours per month** in natural settings is the minimum for lasting health effects. That's only about 10 minutes per day!

Your Daily Sunshine Strategy

10-15 minutes of morning sunlight helps regulate your circadian rhythm and boost serotonin
Expose your skin for 12-15 minutes during peak sun hours for optimal vitamin D production
Start gradually to avoid burning—your skin will build tolerance over time

Try "Grounding" Breaks

Walk barefoot on grass, sand, or dirt for 20-30 minutes
Sit directly on the ground while reading or meditating
Use grounding mats indoors if outdoor access is limited

Maximize Your Nature Minutes

Step outside for phone calls instead of staying at desk
Eat meals outdoors whenever possible
Keep houseplants in your workspace for "micro-nature" benefits
Listen to nature sounds if you can't get outside—studies show even this helps!

Remember: You don't need perfect weather or pristine wilderness. Even urban parks, looking out windows at trees, or sitting by water can provide measurable benefits. The key is consistency, not perfection.

A Quote to Ponder

"Nature employs the mind without fatigue and yet enlivens it. Tranquilizes it and enlivens it. And thus, through the influences of the mind over body, gives the effect of refreshing rest and reinvigoration to the whole system."

-Frederick Law Olmsted, architect of many great American parks

 **Wishing you a sunny and restorative July!** 

Dr. Kimber

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