

## Just 30 Minutes of This Can Decrease Inflammation and Stress

The sounds, sights and smells of nature have many therapeutic benefits. Find out how indulging in this perfectly natural activity for 30 to 60 minutes can improve both your pet's well-being and your own.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Nature therapy, aka forest bathing, is the practice of immersing oneself in the sights, sounds and smells of nature for improved health in body and mind
- A feature of nature therapy is grounding or earthing — putting the body in direct contact with the earth's surface — which may also provide both physiological and behavioral benefits
- Grounding can benefit the body; walking barefoot outside or sitting, working, or sleeping indoors on a grounding mat can improve sleep and may reduce pain. Studies also show that grounding reduces inflammation and improves circulation
- The best way to ground yourself and your pet is to spend time outdoors with your bare feet and your pet's paws in direct contact with the earth; if you or your loved ones can't get outside regularly, grounding mats can be used indoors for both human and furry family members

Nature therapy, which is the practice of going out into nature for fresh air and peace of mind, stems from the Japanese tradition of shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing, defined as immersing oneself in the sights, sounds and smells of nature.

Shinrin-yoku was conceived during the 1980s and has been promoted by Japan's Department of Forestry since 1982 as a public health initiative. Reported research findings associated with this healing practice include therapeutic effects on immune function, cardiovascular health, respiratory disease, depression, anxiety, and hyperactivity disorders.

Researchers attribute some of the beneficial immune effects of being in nature to inhaling molecules called phytoncides secreted by trees and plants to protect themselves from pests and diseases.<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>

There are now a significant number of studies from Japan demonstrating that shinrin-yoku can have numerous health benefits:<sup>6</sup>

- Reduce blood pressure
- Lower blood sugar levels
- Improve pain thresholds
- Lower stress
- Improve concentration and memory
- Improve energy
- Improve cardiovascular and metabolic health

- Lift depression
- Increase anti-cancer protein production
- Help with weight loss
- Boost the immune system with an increase in the count of the body's natural killer (NK) cells

## Importance of Physical Contact With the Earth

Our modern lifestyle often separates us (and our animal companions) from making direct contact with the earth. Research suggests this disconnect may be a contributor to physiological dysfunction and unwellness. Physical connection with the earth via the practice of **grounding** has been found to promote intriguing physiological changes and subjective reports of well-being.

Have you ever wondered how animals know there's an earthquake coming before it happens? The answer: Schumann resonances, or the electromagnetic vibration of the earth, an energy force to which dogs (and humans, science shows) are sensitive.

In 2018, Dr. Abdullah Alabdulgader and colleagues published a fascinating paper in Nature evaluating the earth's magnetic forces and how they influence mammalian autonomic nervous system (ANS) responses.<sup>7</sup> Their research strongly confirms that daily ANS activity in mammals responds to changes in geomagnetic and solar activity. This explains how energetic environmental factors can influence psychophysiology and behaviors in different ways (think full moons and earthquakes).

Animals are especially sensitive to Schumann resonances, which, at 7.8 hertz, are nearly identical to alpha brain wave frequencies (those linked to calmness, creativity, alertness, and learning). Studies conducted at the Halberg Chronobiology Center at the University of Minnesota (Dr. Franz Halberg coined the term "circadian") demonstrate that there are important relationships between the earth's rhythms and resonance and a wide range of human and animal wellness indicators. When biorhythms are disrupted, confusion and agitation are some of the first symptoms.

In the 1960s, 90% of visits to human medical doctors were for acute injury, infectious disease, and childbirth. Today, a whopping 95% of all visits are for stress-related or lifestyle-induced disorders, meaning there are forces interfering with the body's ability to maintain normal health and balance.

Similarly, 50 years ago veterinarians saw patients primarily for acute injuries and infectious diseases. These days, most patients we see are suffering with gastrointestinal (GI) problems, **allergies and skin issues**, musculoskeletal issues, and organ dysfunction.

Interestingly, dogs and cats in the wild don't tend to suffer from those conditions, and one of the reasons, in my opinion, is that wild animals are naturally grounded because they live outside. They're in constant contact with the earth, unlike the animals that live with us in our homes, who often don't have the benefit of regularly making direct contact with the ground.

I think it's important for animal companions to have opportunities to directly touch the earth on a regular basis, preferably several times a day. The best way to ground yourself and your furry family member is to get outside and touch the earth. **Go for a walk**. All animals, given the option, will use the earth's magnetic fields to their benefit; dogs

can even find their way home when they're lost. In fact, research shows that animals purposely touch certain parts of their body to the earth for specific physiologic benefits.

## How Grounding Works

During grounding of a human or animal, the charge is removed from the body. For example, when an indoor-only kitty lives 24/7 above the surface of the earth, let's say, in a **high-rise** in downtown Chicago, she can't benefit from the negative surface charge of the earth that provides an abundance of electrons that move very quickly to reduce the charge on her body. Her body begins to deplete itself of electrons.

By grounding the body, we're able to gather free electrons from the earth that have the ability to combat free radicals. This is especially important for animals that are constantly bombarded by electromagnetic fields (EMFs) inside the home coming from sources such as wireless routers, appliances and electronics.

It's like pouring water on a fire. Fire is oxidation. When we connect the body to the earth and the result is a reduction in pain, it's because we're flooding the body with electrons. These free electrons can readily absorb and reduce free radicals and prevent them from oxidizing healthy cells.

## Studies Point to Significant Health Benefits

Years ago, I had a really interesting **interview with Clint Ober**, who has spent a lot of time researching how the earth's electrical energy influences health. He also spent over 30 years in the cable TV industry, grounding equipment to the earth to maintain the electrical stability of the system.

In our interview, Clint explained that when we are grounded, the body is conductive, but when we put shoes on, we lose that conductivity. He grew curious about whether the loss of contact with the earth was having an effect on human health, so he began experimenting with a voltmeter that he rigged to ground himself while he slept. He discovered he not only slept better, but also noticed that within a few days of sleeping grounded, the chronic pain he lived with began to subside.

Next, Clint decided to design a grounding study involving 60 volunteers. He developed "grounding planes," which were small pads the volunteers slept on. By the end of the study, for the most part the participants reported sleeping better, feeling better, having more energy, and experiencing general improvement in their overall health.

Clint's anecdotal study attracted the attention of a retired anesthesiologist in San Diego. He and Clint designed another study in which they measured the circadian cortisol levels of a group of volunteers every 4 hours for 24 hours before grounding. Then they grounded the group for 6 to 8 weeks and took cortisol measurements again on the same schedule at the end of the study. What they found was very interesting.

Before grounding, the volunteers' cortisol levels were all over the place. But by the end of the study, all the 24-hour circadian profiles were synchronized. The volunteers didn't know each other and didn't live close to one another. This result gave Clint a good indication that grounding affects the **stress hormone cortisol**.

In a subsequent study, Clint worked with an expert in electrophysiology and biofeedback, and they measured the normal biofeedback parameters in a group of 60 individuals. Clint learned that as soon as the body is grounded, it automatically shifts from a sympathetic state to a parasympathetic state, which means it goes from a fight-or-flight

condition to a calm, more relaxed physiologic state.

## **Grounding Can Reduce Inflammation, Improve Circulation**

Many medical experts suspect all disease is caused by **chronic inflammation** over an extended period of time. We certainly know in the animal kingdom that's true. Most persistent diseases have their roots in a chronic low-grade inflammatory process. Disease manifests differently in different bodies, of course, based on a multitude of factors including genetics, environment, and lifestyle. But the underlying common thread is chronic inflammation.

According to Clint, a contributing factor to chronic inflammation is a lack of grounding. In a study of young athletes, it was determined that inflammation doesn't manifest in grounded bodies to the degree that it does in ungrounded bodies.

Another study investigated how grounding improves circulation. The study confirmed that red blood cells also equalize with the earth. They take on a negative surface charge. An example would be if you were to take little magnets and put the negative ends together, they would naturally repel each other. But if you use the positive and negative ends, they pull toward each other. Clint was able to prove, after about 15 years of research and a dozen peer-reviewed published studies, that grounding or earthing absolutely, positively affects physiology.

When we disconnect from the earth, our blood gets sticky and doesn't function properly. Sticky blood can't get into the capillaries. It can't oxygenate tissues. Clint believes this is another underlying cause of chronic inflammation.

## **The Best Way to Ground Yourself and Your Pet**

City dwelling pets are particularly lacking in their ability to get grounded. It's difficult to find a park where you can take your shoes off safely and walk with your dog to get the benefits of earthing, which means putting your feet and your pet's paws in direct contact with the earth.

To get the most benefit from grounding, you need to find a spot outdoors that you and your pet can regularly visit to sit on the ground, or stand on it, or even better, walk on it. Try to spend 30 to 60 minutes at each visit touching the earth directly.

The first thing that will happen, and the most important, is your blood will normalize, which may result in some facial flushing due to increased blood flow. Take a mental inventory of any pain in your body and score it from 1 to 10. After about 30 minutes, you will probably feel your energy level rising, your color will be better, and your pain score could be less. You may even feel happier.

Years ago, when Dr. Mercola started grounding himself, I decided to try it out. I wasn't necessarily entirely convinced. Now I am. These days I sleep on a grounding pad. And for work I have a desk I can both sit and stand at. When I'm sitting, I use a grounding pad.

During storms, my grounding pads are the most popular spots in the house. As soon as my animals sense a storm brewing, sometimes even several hours before, they start vying for a spot on my grounding pads.

Clint believes pets seek to be grounded during storms because there's a buildup of negative charge equal to the positive charge in the clouds. There's a phenomenon with lightning called flashover, which means the strike takes the path of least resistance to ground. If you're well-grounded during a lightning strike, it may hit you but will flash over. Clint believes animals know this instinctively. And fortunately, they don't need double-blind, placebo-controlled studies to prove it! I put down a grounding pad and my animals go lay on it.

If you have an indoor-only kitty, or you live in the city and your pet never or rarely gets the opportunity to go outside and put his paws in direct contact with the earth, a grounding pad may offer indoor health benefits. It can also be tremendously beneficial for pets with **noise or storm phobias**, for senior pets who rarely or never get outside anymore, for pets with chronic pain conditions, and for dogs and cats who are stressed.

Of course, we're all doing the best we can for our furry family members, but the fact is the lifestyles we're able to provide to our dogs and cats really don't compare to the many benefits nature provides, including the ability to ground.

Our pets live safer, often longer lives with us, but many don't get the benefit, for example, of a natural diet or being able to connect with the earth every day. A grounding pad is a nice alternative for your home if you're interested in providing that option to your pets.

## Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [Li, Q. Environ Health Prev Med. 2010 Jan; 15\(1\): 9-17](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Li, Q. Sante Publique, 2019 May 13;S1\(HS\):135-143](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Li, Q., Kawada, T. Nihon Eiseigaku Zasshi, 2014;69\(2\):117-21](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Miyazaki, Y. et al. Nihon Eiseigaku Zasshi, 2014;69\(2\):122-35](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Ideno, Y. et al. BMC Complement Altern Med, 2017 Aug 16;17\(1\):409](#)

<sup>6</sup> [The Forest Bathing Institute](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Alabdulgader, A. et al. Scientific Reports, Volume 8, Article number: 2663 \(2018\)](#)

---