

# Wellness Wednesday



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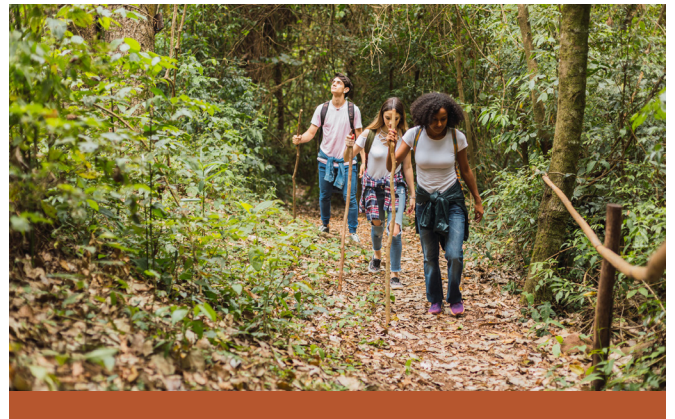
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## New Study Reveals the 1 Simple, Free Activity That Can Improve Mental Health in Minutes

In today's fast-paced and technology-driven world, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and disconnected from nature. However, numerous studies have shown the profound impact that spending time in nature can have on our mental health. In fact, a recent study conducted by researchers at Waterloo University revealed that even just a few minutes in a natural setting can significantly improve feelings of calmness and reduce anxiety levels among young people. This finding highlights the importance of incorporating nature into our daily lives as a simple and free activity that can have a lasting positive effect on our mental well-being.



### The Concept of Forest Bathing

One term that has gained popularity in recent years is "forest bathing" or "Shinrin-yoku" in Japanese. Forest bathing refers to the practice of immersing oneself in the atmosphere of the forest and taking in the sensory experience it offers. This practice has been a part of Japanese culture for centuries and is known for its calming and therapeutic effects. The founder of the platform 1000 Hours Outside, Ginny Yurich, describes forest bathing as a way to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of life and truly unwind in the natural environment.

### The Immediate Benefits of Natural Spaces

The study conducted by Waterloo University focused on the immediate effects of exposure to natural spaces on young people's mental health. The researchers surveyed 70 youth aged 9-17 in various settings, both nature-infused and non-nature-infused. The participants were asked to fill out surveys measuring anxiety levels, calmness, perceived restorativeness, mental demand, and positive and negative affects.

The results of the study revealed that there were significant differences in anxiety levels between the nature-infused spaces and non-nature-infused spaces. After spending time near a lake, the participants' anxiety levels decreased by 9%. In contrast, spending time at a traffic-heavy transit stop led to a 13% increase in anxiety levels. These findings suggest that even brief exposure to natural spaces can have a positive impact on our mental well-being.

### The Impact of Nature on Stress Reduction

The positive effects of spending time in nature on our mental well-being have been well-documented in previous research. A 2010 study examined the impact of forest bathing on stress reduction.

The researchers measured cortisol levels, pulse, blood pressure, and heart rate variability in 280 individuals before and after visiting both forest and city areas. The results showed that time spent in the forest led to a significant decrease in cortisol levels, pulse, and blood pressure. Additionally, forest bathing had positive effects on sympathetic and parasympathetic nerve activity. These findings further support the notion that nature has a profound impact on our stress levels and overall mental well-being.

### The Benefits of Outdoor Time for Children

In addition to the immediate benefits of spending time in nature, there are numerous other advantages, especially for children. Yurich, the founder of 1000 Hours Outside, emphasizes that any amount of time spent outdoors can be beneficial, regardless of the environment. Whether it's enjoying a meal on a balcony or going for a walk around the block, these simple outdoor activities can provide valuable opportunities for children to connect with nature and reap the mental health benefits it offers. Yurich suggests aiming for an average of three hours outside per day, but acknowledges that this may vary depending on factors such as location and season. The goal is to encourage children to spend as much time as possible outdoors, fostering a strong connection with nature and creating lasting memories for the entire family.

### Addressing Youth Mental Health Challenges

The importance of prioritizing youth mental health cannot be overstated. Pre-pandemic data already indicated a concerning rise in persistent feelings of sadness, thoughts of suicide, and psychiatric emergency room visits among young people. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these challenges, further emphasizing the need for effective strategies to support youth mental well-being.

Spending time in nature can be a powerful tool in addressing these challenges. By incorporating nature into daily routines and encouraging outdoor activities, parents can provide their children with a safe and effective means of reducing anxiety and enhancing their overall mental health. In fact, simply being outdoors can serve as a welcomed alternative to excessive screen time, which has been linked to negative mental health outcomes in children.

### The Mindfulness Connection

When children are outside, it's essential to encourage mindfulness and engagement with their surroundings. Minaker suggests simple mindfulness exercises, such as asking children to identify things they see and hear, to help them stay present in the moment. By grounding themselves in the natural environment, children can fully immerse themselves in the experience and reap the maximum benefits nature has to offer. Encouraging mindfulness in natural settings can help children develop important skills, such as risk assessment and sensory awareness. By paying attention to their surroundings and using all their senses, children become active participants in their environment, fostering a sense of connection and curiosity about the world around them.

### Making Nature a Priority

The research is clear: spending time in nature, even for just a few minutes, can have a profound impact on our mental health. Whether it's a walk in the park, a hike in the woods, or simply enjoying a meal outdoors, incorporating nature into our daily lives is a simple and effective way to improve our overall well-being. The benefits of nature are especially crucial for children, as they navigate the challenges of growing up in a fast-paced and digitally-driven world. By prioritizing outdoor time and encouraging mindfulness in natural settings, parents can provide their children with the tools they need to thrive mentally, emotionally, and physically.

So, the next time you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed, step outside, take a deep breath, and immerse yourself in the beauty of nature. Your mind and body will thank you.



# SPANISH TORTILLA WITH PIMENTON AIOLI

## INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 pounds Yukon gold potatoes, peeled  
[4 medium potatoes]  
1 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt  
6 to 8 tablespoons low-sodium chicken or  
vegetable broth  
1/2 large yellow onion, thinly sliced  
6 large eggs  
1/4 teaspoon ground pepper  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

### Pimenton Aioli

1 small garlic clove or 1/2 large clove  
3 tablespoons mayonnaise  
2 teaspoons lemon juice  
1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika  
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

This open-faced omelet, made with layers of potatoes, onions, and eggs, is a classic Spanish dish that is both flavorful and versatile.

### WHY CHOOSE SPANISH TORTILLA?

The Spanish Tortilla is a dish that has stood the test of time. It is loved for its simplicity, yet it packs a punch of flavor. The combination of tender potatoes, savory onions, and creamy eggs creates a satisfying and hearty meal. It is an excellent option for those following a vegetarian or gluten-free diet, as it is free from meat and flour. Plus, it can be easily customized to suit your taste preferences by adding your favorite herbs, spices, or vegetables.

### WHAT IS ANOTHER NAME FOR SPANISH TORTILLA?

Known in English as Spanish omelet, this popular potato egg dish is also called tortilla española or tortilla de patata (potato omelet) in Spanish, because of its origin and its main ingredient.

### Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 /6 slice with ai, Calories: 247 kcal, Carbohydrates: 21.5 g, Protein: 9 g, Fat: 14.5 g, Saturated Fat: 3 g, Cholesterol: 188 mg, Sodium: 363.5 mg, Fiber: 2 g, Sugar: 2.5 g



## INSTRUCTIONS



## HOW TO MAKE IT

1. **Boil the Potatoes:** Start by boiling a large pot of salted water. Add the sliced potatoes and cook until they are tender but not falling apart. Drain the potatoes and set them aside.
2. **Cook the Onions:** In a non-stick skillet, cook the sliced onions with a splash of chicken or vegetable broth over medium-low heat. Stir occasionally until the onions are very tender and the broth has cooked off.
3. **Combine the Potatoes and Onions:** In a large bowl, beat the eggs and season them with salt and pepper. Add the cooked potatoes and onions to the bowl and gently combine everything.
4. **Cook the Tortilla:** Heat some olive oil in a clean non-stick skillet over medium heat. Pour the egg mixture into the skillet and use a spatula to press down the mixture and smooth out the top. Cook until the edges are set, then reduce the heat to medium-low and continue cooking until the top is mostly set.
5. **Flip the Tortilla:** Carefully flip the tortilla by placing a larger plate over the skillet and turning it upside down. Slide the tortilla back into the skillet and cook until the center is no longer runny.
6. **Let it Cool:** Transfer the tortilla to a plate and let it cool for at least 20 minutes. This will allow the flavors to meld and the tortilla to set.
7. **Prepare the Pimenton Aioli:** While the tortilla is cooling, prepare the pimenton aioli by combining grated garlic, mayonnaise, lemon juice, smoked paprika, and salt in a small bowl. Stir well and refrigerate until ready to use.
8. **Serve and Enjoy:** Slice the Spanish Tortilla into servings and serve with a dollop of the pimenton aioli.

<https://dailyburn.com/life/db/dumbbell-workout-compound-exercises/>

## Featured Exercise ► Reverse Lunge and Curl Exercise

### HOW TO DO IT:

- Stand tall with a dumbbell in each hand, palms facing forward, and feet hip-width apart.
- Take a large step backward with your right leg, planting the ball of your right foot on the ground.
- Bend your left leg to approximately 90 degrees, lowering your right knee a few inches above the floor. Your left knee should be aligned over your ankle.
- As you lunge, curl the dumbbells towards your shoulders, keeping your elbows close to your sides.
- Pause for a moment at the bottom of the lunge, then push through the heel of your left foot to return to the starting position.
- As you stand back up, lower the dumbbells back to the starting position.
- Repeat the movement, alternating legs for the desired number of repetitions.

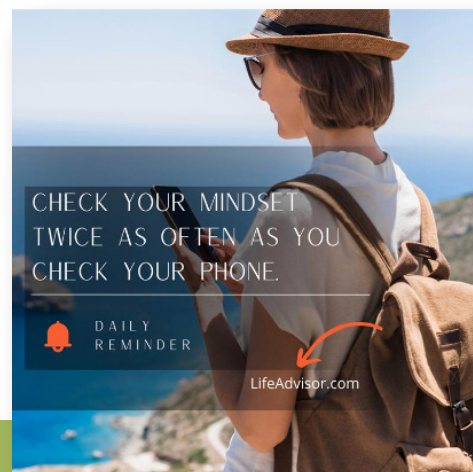
### THE BENEFITS:

The Dumbbell Reverse Lunge and Curl is a compound exercise that engages multiple muscle groups simultaneously. It targets your legs, core, and biceps, making it a great addition to any strength training or full-body workout routine. By combining two movements into one, you save time and increase the intensity of your workout.



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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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