# New study reveals nature as effective therapy for chronic lower back pain sufferers



Spending time in nature can serve as a vital coping mechanism for individuals grappling with chronic lower back pain, according to a pioneering study published in *The Journal of Pain*. This research, unique in its focus, engaged participants who had endured chronic pain for several decades, revealing that exposure to natural settings provides a crucial source of both physical and mental relief. The findings indicate that not only does nature foster a sense of escapism, allowing sufferers to temporarily divert their attention away from pain, but it also enables social interactions that can counteract feelings of isolation often linked to chronic conditions.

Participants highlighted the therapeutic aspects of being outdoors, where natural elements such as fresh air and the soothing sounds and sights of water contributed to enhanced tranquillity and reduced anxiety. Many expressed a preference for exercising in nature over traditional gym environments, finding the former far more appealing and restorative. This strong connection to nature discloses a shift in how we understand treatment modalities for chronic pain management, advocating for a broader recognition of nature’s potential benefits.

However, the study also revealed significant barriers to accessing these beneficial environments. Many individuals reported challenges posed by uneven terrain and inadequate seating, which deterred them from fully enjoying natural spaces. This raises critical questions regarding health equity and the accessibility of restorative resources for those with chronic pain. Acknowledging these limitations, the researchers recommend adapting natural spaces to incorporate more supportive design features that could make them more accessible to everyone.

The research was conducted by teams from the University of Plymouth and the University of Exeter and involved in-depth interviews with ten participants who had chronic lower back pain for periods ranging between five and thirty-eight years. Alexander Smith, a PhD researcher at the University of Plymouth and lead author of the study, underscored that “amid a push for novel and more holistic therapies to treat chronic pain, nature has been suggested as a potential option.” He emphasised that the simple modifications to enhance access to natural environments could significantly bolster both physical activity and mental wellbeing for those suffering from chronic pain.

Further corroborating this emerging view, additional studies are exploring the therapeutic potential of natural elements in various settings. Research on biophilic design suggests that incorporating nature-inspired features indoors—like having views of greenery and providing natural light—can enhance self-care practices and contribute to pain management. These findings align with evidence that exposure to natural environments can lessen reliance on analgesic medications while promoting improved health overall.

Moreover, recent studies targeting diverse demographic groups, including pediatrics, indicate that nature exposure therapy can yield substantial benefits across various age groups and pain conditions. Such non-pharmacological interventions significantly reduce pain intensity and anxiety, reinforcing the notion that integrating nature into pain management strategies could prove transformative.

As we consider the importance of nature in chronic pain care, innovative approaches, such as virtual reality simulations of natural environments, are already being explored. These technologies aim to overcome barriers to physical access, suggesting a future where individuals can experience the therapeutic advantages of nature without needing to navigate challenging terrain.

In conclusion, the current wave of research is elucidating the profound impact that nature can have on individuals living with chronic pain. By prioritising access to natural spaces and embracing innovations in therapy, we can take meaningful steps toward improving both the quality of life and pain management for those affected.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.miragenews.com/nature-exposure-eases-chronic-back-pain-1471116/), [[2]](https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/19/4/2248)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.miragenews.com/nature-exposure-eases-chronic-back-pain-1471116/), [[3]](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2264925/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.miragenews.com/nature-exposure-eases-chronic-back-pain-1471116/), [[4]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37768931/), [[5]](https://www.contemporarypediatrics.com/view/nature-exposure-therapy-for-pediatric-patients-with-chronic-pain)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7207132/), [[7]](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fbuil.2019.00142/full)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.miragenews.com/nature-exposure-eases-chronic-back-pain-1471116/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/19/4/2248> - This study examines the design of biophilic interior environments to foster self-care practices for individuals living with chronic pain, including lower back pain. It highlights the therapeutic benefits of incorporating natural elements into interior spaces, such as exposure to flowers, forest bathing, and natural lighting, which have been associated with reduced pain and improved mental health. The research underscores the importance of integrating nature-inspired features into therapeutic environments to enhance pain management and overall well-being.
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2264925/> - This article discusses the implications of environmental factors, including exposure to natural light and nature scenes, on pain control. It presents evidence that such environmental elements can decrease the use of analgesic medications and enhance patient outcomes. The study suggests that designing treatment environments to incorporate natural light and views of nature can significantly benefit patients experiencing pain, promoting faster stress recovery and improved pain management.
4. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37768931/> - This systematic review protocol aims to examine the effects of nature exposure therapy on pain experience and quality of life in patients with chronic pain. By analyzing controlled trials comparing nature exposure therapy to standard care, the study seeks to provide evidence for or against the inclusion of natural spaces in chronic pain management strategies, highlighting the potential benefits of non-pharmacological interventions.
5. <https://www.contemporarypediatrics.com/view/nature-exposure-therapy-for-pediatric-patients-with-chronic-pain> - This article highlights a study presented at the 2023 American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference & Exhibition, suggesting that nature exposure therapy could be beneficial for pediatric patients with chronic pain. The study found significant reductions in pain intensity and anxiety among participants undergoing nature exposure therapy compared to standard care, indicating the potential of this non-pharmacological intervention in managing chronic pain in children.
6. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7207132/> - This research explores how exposure to greenspaces may reduce the global burden of pain. It discusses mechanisms such as negative air ions and sunlight exposure, which are prevalent in natural environments and have been associated with pain relief. The study suggests that incorporating natural elements into urban planning could be a strategy to alleviate chronic pain on a global scale.
7. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fbuil.2019.00142/full> - This study investigates how nearby nature buffers the relationship between pain catastrophizing and pain intensity among urban residents with chronic pain. It suggests that exposure to natural environments can serve as a distraction, reducing the focus on pain and mitigating the impact of pain catastrophizing, thereby potentially decreasing pain intensity.