

- Beaches / Summer

## Why a quick beach trip is good for mental health

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With summer finally here, heading to the beach is a no-brainer—and it can improve your mental health, too.



“Everything from just being near a body of water to being out in the sun carries noticeable mental health benefits. When you put them together, the holistic experience uplifts your mood, reduces stress and promotes mental clarity,” explains Dr. Jon Edward B. Jurilla, psychiatry chief of Makati Medical Center (MakatiMed). “Anyone that’s been to the beach and left feeling better knows this is true, even if they can’t exactly explain why.”

So how do you maximize your next beach trip for better mental health? Dr. Jurilla recommends starting by simply taking time to soak in the sun. “Vitamin D from the sun increases serotonin levels, a neurotransmitter in mood functioning. More serotonin means a better overall mood, reduced anxiety and even better sleep,” says Dr. Jurilla. “It is why vitamin D deficiency is linked to depression.”

Numerous studies have found that being in or near water is a game-changer for well-being. “Water has an inherent calming effect, which is why gazing at the ocean alters the frequency of our brain waves, inducing a gentle meditative state. The sound of water is also much more calming compared to typical urban noise, allowing your mind and body to relax even further.” Dr. Jurilla adds that being around water also encourages physical activity. “If you’re near water, you might be encouraged to start swimming, floating or diving. All of these are good exercises for your entire body, improving your physical health that’s also closely tied to your mental health.”

Once outside the water, it’s also worth it to simply walk around on the sand. Even a leisurely stroll along the shoreline is enough exercise to release endorphins, known as the feelgood hormones. “These endorphins work to alleviate stress, promoting a sense of calmness and happiness.”

Even just breathing in the beach’s fresh air goes a long way. Beach air is generally cleaner and fresher, with higher levels of oxygen, which carries benefits such as better sleep.

“Research has found that the smell of beach air is soothing because it carries negative ions,” adds Dr. Jurilla. “These negative ions help your body absorb more oxygen. More oxygen means improved serotonin levels, adding to the mental health benefits you already get from being in the sun.”