

Social Benefits

Healthy
in nature



How to Use this Information

This information highlights the *social benefits* people receive when they connect with nature and how being outdoors improves our overall well-being.

► Promote the concept!

Use this information to help promote healthy in nature activities, policies and programs in your area.

► Spread the news!

- Give this information and research to members of the public, fellow staff members, municipal leaders, community partners and others.
- Incorporate this information in your communication materials such as a recreation newsletter or programming guide or in correspondence with municipal council and community partners.



Know the Information



- Being outdoors in nature provides opportunities for people to connect with others and, as a result, to develop relationships. For example, you may come across the same person when you're walking your dog or, when waiting your turn at a public water fountain, you may chat with someone in line. When people feel connected to others, it creates a sense of belonging and that contributes to a sense of community.¹ Neighbourhood spaces such as parks, green belts or nature paths contribute to social interaction, which improves a person's overall sense of well-being.
- Being outdoors:
 - fosters social connections.³
 - while interacting with others develops social skills such as sharing, taking turns, helping others and resolving conflict.³
 - creates positive feelings about and respect for others.⁸
 - encourages people to love and protect the environment.⁸
 - increases social capital, which is how well people look after each other, cooperate and trust others.⁷
 - Playing outdoors develops gross motor skills in children such as jumping, running and climbing and it develops fine motor skills such as touching, feeling and scooping.¹⁰
- Playing outdoors positively influences the development of life-long conservation values and promotes ecological knowledge.^{3,4}
- Children engage in more creative, interactive play in nature.⁵
- Playing outdoors together is an ideal time for parents to engage with their children.⁶
- Being outdoors promotes healthy personal development and a sense of freedom and independence. It nurtures an inner strength that promotes stress resiliency.⁵
- Studies show that people are more caring when they are around nature.¹





FOOTNOTES

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- 3 | Be Out There Campaign (2010). Whole Child: Developing Mind, Body and Spirit through Outdoor Play. National Wildlife Federation. Retrieved from https://www.nwf.org/pdf/Be%20Out%20There/BeOutThere_WholeChild_V2.pdf
- 4 | Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood (2008). Nature Play. Retrieved from http://www.greenheartsinc.org/Nature_Play.html
- 5 | Pretty, J., et al. (2009). Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways. University of Essex, Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society. Retrieved from <http://www.hphpcentral.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Nature-Childhood-and-Health-iCES-Occ-Paper-2009-2-FINAL.pdf>
- 6 | Ginsburg et al. (2007). The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds. American Academy of Pediatrics, 119 (1), 182-188.
- 7 | Maller, C., Henderson-Wilson, Pryor, A., et al. (2008). Healthy parks, healthy people: The health benefits of contact with nature in a park context. (2nd ed.) Deakin University and Parks Victoria. Retrieved from http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/313821/HPHP-deakin-literature-review.pdf
- 8 | White, R., (2004) Young Children's Relationship with Nature: Its Importance to Children's Development & the Earth's Future; White Hutchinson Leisure and Learning Group. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehutchinson.com/children/articles/childrennature.shtml>