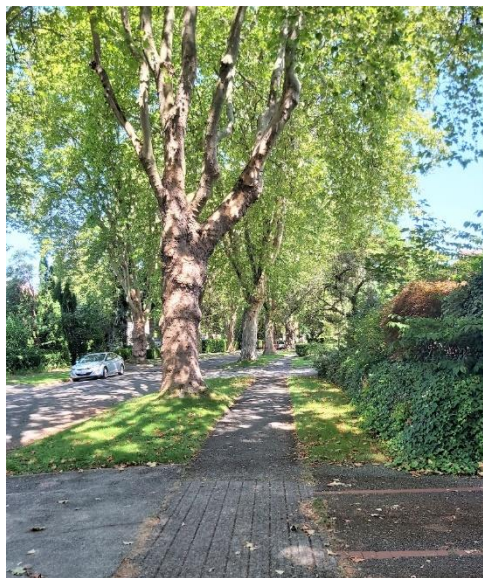


How Nature Can Improve Your Health

**consult a physical before starting an exercise program*



This article is not about how many calories you burn when you are walking, or the physical benefits of movement. This article is about why you should walk, run, or ride your bike outside to feel better.

According Dr. Scott Lear, “As little as two hours per week in nature can lead to better health”. Research conducted in 8 countries demonstrated that just living in an area with more parks, fields, and green space increases walking by an average of 24 minutes per week than those in more urban areas. Being in nature has a calming effect and can result in a lower occurrence of stress, depression, and anxiety. It has also been associated with improved learning.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-44097-3#Sec8>

Why would walking in nature make you feel better? A few reasons include - Vitamin D, the phytoncides given off by trees, fresh-air, and the reduced cortisol levels achieved after about 20 minutes of activity,

There is some very exciting research that shows there are positive effects from just looking at pictures of plants and trees; reduced stress, **blood pressure, heart rate and muscle tension**. Further studies have found using virtual reality to view forests also reduces cortisol levels.

In one 1984 study, researchers assigned a small group of patients to a room with a view of trees and a garden, while others had a window facing a brick wall. Those patients with the view of nature had faster recovery rates.

Since many of us will not be traveling or going on vacation this winter it is very hopeful to know that watching videos, walking in a park or even sitting at a window and looking at nature can help improve our mental health.

There are quite a few forest walk videos on YouTube. I had a definite preference for no music, even the videos that had “nature sounds” I enjoyed more with the sound off. I used Chromecast to play the video to my TV <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=478TeAxm12g>.

This video has both piano music and nature sounds. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOEGIGx8rr4>

