

Hug a Tree

Better health and well-being associated with increased time spent in nature

There is growing evidence of a positive association between contact with nature and natural environments and better health and well-being. This study assessed the time of exposure subjects had to nature and their self-reported health and subjective well-being. There appears to be a threshold of 120 minutes/week in nature to get the benefits of better health and subjective well-being with 59% of people reporting better health and 23% reporting better well-being. The exposure can be in one visit or multiple shorter visits over the week.



Abstract:

- Spending time in natural environments can benefit health and well-being, but exposure-response relationships are under-researched. We examined associations between recreational nature contact in the last seven days and self-reported health and well-being. Participants (n= 19,806) were drawn from the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey (2014/15-2015/16); weighted to be nationally representative. Weekly contact was categorised using 60 min blocks. Analyses controlled for residential greenspace and other neighbourhood and individual factors. Compared to no nature contact last week, the likelihood of reporting good health or high well-being became significantly greater with contact >/=120 mins (e.g. 120-179 mins: ORs [95% CIs]: Health = 1.59 [1.31-1.92]; Well-being = 1.23 [1.08-1.40]). Positive associations peaked between 200-300 mins per week with no further gain. The pattern was consistent across key groups including older adults and those with long-term health issues. It did not matter how 120 mins of contact a week was achieved (e.g. one long vs. several shorter visits/week). Prospective longitudinal and intervention studies are a critical next step in developing possible weekly nature exposure guidelines comparable to those for physical activity.

Many studies of nature exposure have focused on people's access to nature, not the actual time they spend in it. In this study, the authors found that 120 minutes weekly (either at one time or broken up over the week) was the threshold for seeing improvements in health and well-being with maximum effects found between 200-300 minutes weekly. These results were consistent regardless of age, sex, baseline health, and whether the green space was urban or rural. Exposure to nature costs nothing, has no side-effects and is widely available. We are fortunate to live in a region and state with excellent natural resources. We have a beautiful, accessible lake front and excellent county and state parks. Not many things out there can give a nearly 60% increase in good health and over 20% increase in our feelings of well-being. Nature is among the best stress and anxiety reducers. So go outside and hug a tree, you may be surprised at what you get back!

[Spending at Least 120 Minutes a Week in Nature Is Associated With Good Health and Wellbeing Sci Rep 2019 Jun 13;9\(1\)7730](#)