

## THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF NATURE

Why is getting outdoors important? Is it just the exercise that is good for us? No, there are many benefits to being outside beyond exercise:

- Having time outside can give your day structure and break up the monotony.
- Being in 'green spaces' - areas where there is grass, trees and plants e.g. a park - have been shown to reduce stress and improve mood. It has even been linked to improvements in physical health outcomes.
- These benefits may be increased further when we are also able to sit or walk by 'blue spaces' - rivers, lakes, the sea - as these also improve wellbeing.

Why is this? Well, we aren't totally sure! It may be that being out in nature is a basic human need, often call nature-connectedness, and one we can easily neglect in our busy lives. Nature-connectedness covers a lot of things including time we spend outside, with animals and even appreciating where our food comes from.

Another reason being outside helps our wellbeing is because of the health benefits of small amounts of sun exposure:



**Increases levels of Vitamin D**



**Improves mood**



**Improves sleep**



**Improves brain function**



**Stronger bones**

So what if you can't get out regularly? Well, there are a few things you can do to bring nature to you:

- Have house plants
- Spend time with your pets
- Keep fresh herbs in the kitchen
- Grow your own vegetables in your garden or patio
- Sit in your garden if you have one or just outside your front door
- Position your chair to face out of the window
- Watch nature documentaries
- Get yourself a bird watching book and start seeing what you spot out of your window

Remember, while getting out in nature is very important, you also need to wear sunscreen to protect your skin. Enjoy your green and blue spaces!