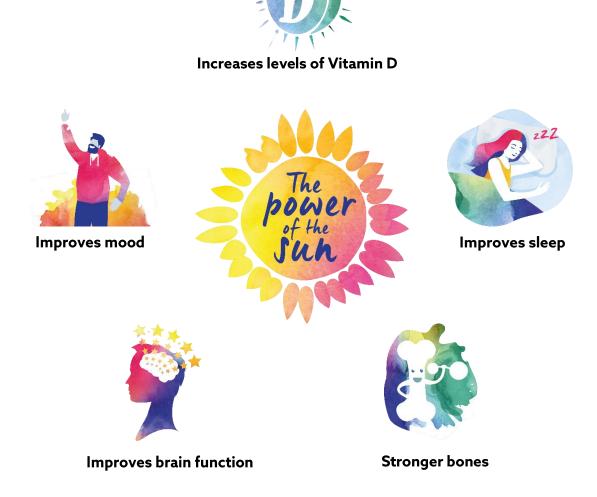# THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF NATURE

We have been told that we can spend more time outside but why is this 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 give break up the monotony
- Being in 'green spaces'- areas where there is grass, tress and plants e.g. a park- has 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 'blues 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 cab 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

The power of the sun

Improves sleep

Improves brain function

Stronger bones

So what if you can't get out? Or you have been told you must self-isolate? Well there are a few thinks 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, we must always follow government guidelines on social distancing. It is also important to wear sunscreen to protect your skin. Enjoy your green and blue spaces!