

CONTACT WITH NATURE

In Europe, 75% of the population lives in urban areas and has little contact with nature. However, it is increasingly recognized that this contributes to a rise in diseases, whereas spending time near green spaces and biodiversity has beneficial effects on health.

Lowers the risk of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and stress

People who have regular contact with nature experience a moderate to significant decrease in depression and anxiety scores¹



Lowers blood pressure

Regular walks in nature lead to an average decrease of 4.8 mmHg in systolic blood pressure¹

Reduces the risk of diabetes

A meta-analysis shows that people with moderate to high exposure to green spaces have a significantly lower incidence of diabetes³



Reduces mortality

Studies have shown that people living surrounded by greenery have a lower overall mortality rate compared to those in urban environments. This highlights the importance of creating parks and giving everyone access to nature.⁵

Improves concentration and reduces hyperactivity

in ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)



Several theories explain this effect:

1 Biophilia :

Humans are naturally drawn to natural elements such as light, wind, smells, sounds, landscapes, or animals.

2 Attention Restoration Theory :

Natural landscapes are rich in elements that promote focus and attention²

Boosts immunity and microbiota

The overly «sterile» nature of urban environments leads to biodiversity loss and depletion of skin flora, increasing allergies and skin diseases. Studies exposing children to forest and rural soil have shown improvements in their immune markers and microbiota⁴



Strengthens muscles and the heart

Walking regularly in nature helps you take more steps each day, strengthens your muscles, and supports the health of your heart, lungs, and circulation.²



THE SUSTAINABLE PRESCRIPTION

- ◆ Try to spend at least 2 hours each week in a park or natural setting.
- ◆ Garden at home or in community gardens.
- ◆ Participate in conservation and nature observation activities.
- ◆ Advocate for green spaces and pedestrian-friendly public areas.

When to discuss contact with nature?

Particularly in cases of hypertension, stress, overweight/obesity, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, sedentary lifestyle, respiratory diseases (asthma, COPD), ADHD, anxiety, dysbiosis (constipation), frequent infections, depression, heart failure, or post-surgery recovery.

REFERENCES

1. Nguyen P-Y, Astell-Burt T, Rahimi-Ardabili H, Feng X. Effect of nature prescriptions on cardiometabolic and mental health, and physical activity: a systematic review. Lancet Planet Health 2023; 7: e313-28.

2. Senn N, Gaille M, del Río Carral M, Gonzalez Holguera J (dirs). Santé et environnement. Vers une nouvelle approche globale. RMS editor 2022. PDF can be downloaded for free. Chapter 34 contains a great number of references about contact with nature.

3. Caoimhe Twohig-Bennett C, Jones A. The health benefits of the great outdoors: A systematic review and meta-analysis of greenspace exposure and health outcomes. Environmental Research 2018; 166: 628-637.

4. Roslund MI, et al. Biodiversity intervention enhances immune regulation and health-associated commensal microbiota among daycare children. Sci. Adv. 2020; 6: eab2578.

5. Rojas-Rueda D, Nieuwenhuijsen MJ, Gascon M, Perez-Leon D, Mudu P. Green spaces and mortality : A systematic review and meta-analysis of cohort studies. Lancet Planet Health 2019 Nov;3(11): e469-e477. Erratum in: Lancet Planet Health 202. Aug;5(8):e504.

