

# FACT SHEET: Spending Time Outdoors Has Mental Health Benefits

Parks and natural spaces have suddenly become the most important areas in our communities as we look for safe spaces for quiet reflection, solitary recreational opportunities, and somewhere to escape the confinement of our homes. Spring has sprung, flowers are blooming, and trees are leafing out – it’s a wonderful time to enjoy the scenery. And, being outside in the natural environment is good for your mental and physical health. Increasing studies confirm that exposure to the natural environment can provide the following benefits:

- ▶ Improves blood pressure
- ▶ Makes us happier and more creative
- ▶ Improves short-term memory
- ▶ Reduces stress and inflammation
- ▶ Eliminates fatigue
- ▶ Fights depression and anxiety
- ▶ May protect your vision
- ▶ Improves ability to focus and perform better on creative tasks
- ▶ Boosts the immune system
- ▶ Lowers risk of early death.

## RESTORATIVE PROPERTIES OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Experiencing natural environments has restorative properties. It elicits feelings of pleasure, provides a sense of escape from demands of daily life, and gives a sense of being away.

How does this relate to clean water? Well, many stormwater best management practices (BMPs) include areas of native trees, shrubs, and perennial grass plantings that help filter stormwater pollutants and reduce stormwater volumes and rates. These areas increase the natural spaces available in the community and attract native birds, butterflies, and small animals.

As more municipalities plant trees and build rain gardens, vegetated swales, and riparian forest buffers, the more we are improving water quality while also improving our mental health!

## WE CAN HELP!

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Natural light helps regulate your natural body clock. Spending more time in nature exposes your body to natural light, which can do wonders to improve sleep patterns.

Use of green spaces is associated with decreased health complaints, improved blood pressure and cholesterol levels, reduced stress, improved general health perceptions, and a greater ability to face problems.



Stormwater BMPs such as those shown above help filter stormwater pollutants and improve water quality and our mental health!