



Lawns Improve Your Physical and Mental Health

Admit it. When you spy an expanse of lush lawn, you want to walk, run or lie down on it. Lawns have that effect because green spaces improve your physical and mental health – and quality of life in general – as years of research prove.

Go Play Outside! Getting Children Outdoors

Child obesity in America is a serious issue, one that is being combated every day as kids are tempted to eat junk food and spend their days in front of computers or watching T.V., instead of playing outside. A nearby outdoor park or lawn provides a safe, comfortable place to play that can make all the difference. A recent study showed that children living in neighborhoods with more green space gained 13 percent less weight over a two-year period than children living amid more concrete and few trees. Lawns also serve as a low-cost, injury-prevention surface for games and sports, and have the added bonus of trapping dirt, dust and other debris from the air making it easier to breathe.

Along with their physical health benefits, lawns also have a calming effect on children struggling with attention deficit disorder symptoms. Researchers at the University of Illinois discovered that green play settings have cognitive benefits for children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The greener a child's play area, the less severe were his or her ADHD symptoms. Even if the activity was simply reading in a green setting, the symptoms improved.

Adults and Green Space

For adults, green space has been linked to longer life for seniors, faster recovery from injury, lower body mass and less stress. A Japanese study, for instance, revealed that access to green space added five years to the life span of senior citizens. Doctors also have found that hospital patients recover faster when given a landscape view rather than seeing just the walls of adjoining buildings. And research shows that like lawns, plants lower blood pressure, reduce muscle tension related to stress^{1,2}, improve attention and reduce feelings of fear, anger and aggression³.

Maintaining a lawn is also a great way to stay fit. Caring for the lawn burns more calories per hour versus other household activities:

For a 180 lb. person 60 minutes of raking burns 351 calories vs. 60 minutes of weight lifting burns 254 calories

For a 180 lb. person 60 minutes of fertilizing (walking) burns 204 calories vs. 60 minutes of indoor painting burns 177 calories

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Community Green Space

Neighborhood gardens and public parks strengthen communities, and make them safer, cleaner places to live. One study at a Chicago public housing development concluded that residents of buildings with more trees and grass reported they knew their neighbors better and socialized with them more often, expressed stronger feelings of community and felt safer and better adjusted than did residents in identical settings located on more barren settings⁴. Studies over a three-decade period also reveal that vandalism decreases noticeably in communities, neighborhoods and housing projects where landscaping projects are promoted⁵.

Source:

1. Takano T., Nakamura K., Watanabe M. *Heath Promotion/International Health, Division of Public Heath, Graduate School of Tokyo Medical and Dental University, Tokyo, Japan. Takano*
2. Turfgrass Resource Center: *Our Precious Planet*; <http://www.turfgrassod.org/trc/environment.html>
3. *GrowerTalks*; <http://growertalks.com/archive/articles/1384.asp>
4. *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: Nice to See You: How Trees Build a Neighborhood*
5. Charles A. Lewis: *The Role of Horticulture in Human Well-Being and Social Development*;