



# Be Well

## Get Some Green Exercise

**Over** the past several decades, our exercise environment has quickly become drastically different than the natural environment inhabited by our ancestors. Treadmills, yoga studios, and indoor swimming pools are just some of the tools we now are able to use inside to eliminate our excuse of not getting enough exercise because of the weather. Many of us now almost exclusively exercise indoors, whether it's in a local gym or in our own home. But as long as you are getting enough exercise, that doesn't matter, right? Well, some recent studies focusing on the benefits of outdoor exercise may disagree.

**Physiologic Benefits:** Several studies have now started to dive further into "green exercise" or exercise performed in a natural environment. These studies have been able to take a closer look on this type of exercise and its effect on different physiological health markers. One study in Japan found both systolic and diastolic blood pressure to be significantly lower after exercising in a rural forest environment compared to the same amount of exercise in an urban environment. There is also evidence to suggest that people actually exert themselves more when walking outside as opposed to indoors on a track or treadmill. Despite this increase in effort, outdoor exercisers also tend to perceive exercise to be easier than their indoor exercising peers.

**Psychologic Benefits:** In addition to physiologic benefits, more and more research is demonstrating the improvements outdoor exercise has on our mental health too. An analysis of 10 studies performed in the U.K. showed significant mental health improvements directly correlated with outdoor exercise such as walking, gardening, fishing, or bike riding. These mental health improvements include, but aren't limited to, decreases in depression and anxiety along with an increase in productivity. How long do you have to spend exercising in a green environment before you start seeing improvements you ask? A mere 5 minute walk is all it takes to see significant changes in mental state..

**Time for Sunshine:** In addition to all of the physical and mental benefits of outdoor exercise, sun exposure also plays a major role in our overall health. There have been links to increased serotonin levels with sun exposure, which can help with the treatment and prevention of depression. This is important during winter, since days are shorter and time spent in the sunshine is at a minimum for most people. Vitamin D production also increases with sun exposure, which is important news for the 42% of Americans who are Vitamin D deficient. This production of Vitamin D aides in the absorption of calcium and phosphate, two minerals vital to bone health.



From Corporate Fitness Works Team Leader: Kelsey Ball



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## 5 Reasons to Exercise Outside



Improves Mood



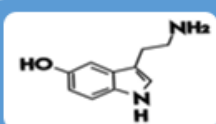
Free & accessible



Improves blood pressure



Increases Vitamin D Production



Increased serotonin levels

### References:

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