

Allotment gardeners reap healthy rewards

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People who have an allotment, especially those aged over 60, tend to be significantly healthier than those who do not. Researchers writing in BioMed Central's open access journal *Environmental Health* have shown that the small gardens were associated with increased levels of physical activity at all ages, and improved health and well-being in more elderly people.

Agnes van den Berg, from Wageningen University and Research Centre, the Netherlands, worked with a team of researchers to carry out a study into the [health](#) benefits of allotment gardening. She said, "Taken together, our findings provide the first direct empirical evidence for health benefits of allotment gardens. Having an allotment garden may promote an active life-style and contribute to healthy aging".

Allotments are small plots of land given to community residents to garden fruits and [vegetables](#) for personal consumption and recreation. The researchers polled 121 gardeners and 63 of their neighbors who did not have allotments. During the peak gardening times of the Summer months, those with allotments carried out an extra day's physical activity every week. For the over-60s, perceived general health, stress levels and GP consultations were all significantly improved. Speaking about the results, van den Berg said, "Around the world, allotment gardens are increasingly under pressure from building and infrastructure developments. Considering that allotments may play a vital role in developing active and healthy lifestyles, governments and local authorities might do well to protect and enhance them".

More information: Allotment gardening and health: a comparative study among allotment gardeners and their neighbors without an allotment Agnes E Van den Berg, Marijke Van Winsum-Westra, Sjerp De Vries and Sonja ME Van Dillen *Environmental Health* (in press), www.ehjournal.net/

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