

Health benefits of 'green exercise' for kids shown in new study

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Children who are exposed to scenes of nature while exercising are more likely to experience health-enhancing effects after activity, according to a Coventry University study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

Sports science academics in the University's Department of Applied Sciences and Health asked kids aged 9-10 years to complete a series of 15 minute moderate intensity cycling activities – one whilst viewing a video of a forest track synced to the exercise bike and another with no visual stimulus.

The researchers found that after the 'green exercise' the children's post-activity [blood pressure](#) was significantly lower than it was without the simulated forest environment, indicating that the nature scenes promoted positive [health](#) effects.

Data showed that the children's mean systolic blood pressure – the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats – was 97.2 mmHg a quarter of an hour after green exercise, compared with 102.7 mmHg after normal activity (over 5 per cent lower).

Lower blood pressure is normally associated with a lower risk of developing health problems, whereas [high blood pressure](#) – also known as hypertension – is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

Dr Michael Duncan, lead author of the study and associate head of the

Department of Applied Sciences and Health at Coventry University, said:

"Hypertension is a chronic health problem across the world, so given the results we've seen in our study it's crucial that we continue to try to understand the role physical activity and – in particular – green exercise plays in blood pressure.

"If there is indeed a correlation between viewing scenes of nature and a [lower blood pressure](#) post exercise, as indicated by our data, it could have very positive implications in encouraging [public health](#) practitioners to prescribe outdoor exercise to reduce health risk."

More information: Michael J. Duncan, Neil D. Clarke, Samantha L. Birch, Jason Tallis, Joanne Hankey, Elizabeth Bryant and Emma L. J. Eyre, "The Effect of Green Exercise on Blood Pressure, Heart Rate and Mood State in Primary School Children," *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2014, 11(4), 3678-3688; [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph110403678](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph110403678)

Provided by Coventry University

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