

Spending two hours per week in nature brings bountiful benefits, study finds

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Turns out taking in a lungful—120 minutes' worth—of fresh air could actually be the main key to health and well-being, a new study says.

Just two hours a week appears to be a "crucial threshold" for mental and [physical health](#), said the study led by researchers at the University of Exeter in England and Uppsala University in Sweden.

Those who spent 120 minutes weekly in natural settings such as parks, woodlands, beaches and [nature preserves](#) were "significantly more likely" to report good [health](#) and psychological well-being, the researchers said in a statement.

Those who spent less than two hours outdoors weekly exhibited the same level of health as those who spent no time outside, said the study, Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with [good health](#) and wellbeing, which was published in *Scientific Reports* last week.

Moreover, it didn't have to be two straight hours, the study of 20,000 people in England found. The [health benefits](#) appeared whether someone immersed him or herself in nature for one long visit or several short ones. In addition, the 120-minute benefit did not differentiate between men, women, old, young, occupation or ethnicity, economic level or existing health conditions and disabilities.

"It's well known that getting outdoors in nature can be good for people's health and wellbeing, but until now we've not been able to say how much is enough," said study leader Mathew White, of the University of Exeter Medical School, in a statement. "The majority of nature visits in this research took place within just two miles of home, so even visiting local urban green spaces seems to be a good thing. Two hours a week is hopefully a realistic target for many people, especially given that it can be spread over an entire week to get the benefit."

The Exeter study drew its data from Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Survey, a collection of data on people's weekly contact with the natural world.

"The thing that most surprised us was how consistent this was across nearly all the groups we looked at: young and old, male, female, urban

and rural dwellers, those in deprived versus rich neighborhoods, but perhaps most importantly among those with long-standing illnesses or disabilities," White told CNN. "We were worried our effect was just that healthier people visited nature but this finding suggested even people with known illnesses who did manage to get two hours a week in nature fared better."

While the study does not establish a causal relationship, the corollary is unmistakable, The Washington Post noted.

"There are many reasons why spending time in nature may be good for health and well-being, including getting perspective on life circumstances, reducing stress, and enjoying quality time with friends and family," said study co-author Terry Hartig, a professor at Uppsala University, in the statement. "The current findings offer valuable support to health practitioners in making recommendations about spending time in nature to promote basic health and wellbeing, similar to guidelines for weekly physical activity."

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