



PARKS AND CHRONIC DISEASE MANAGEMENT

There is a well-known link between the physical activity associated with parks and recreation programs and reductions in chronic diseases such as Type II Diabetes and heart disease. But research shows that even being able to see a park can help improve an individual's health and well-being.

THE FACTS

- » Diabetic individuals taking 30-minute walks in a green space experienced lower blood glucose levels than spending the same amount of time doing physical activity in other settings. Thirty minutes of walking in nature resulted in larger drops in blood glucose than three hours of cycling indoors.¹
- » The risk of cardiovascular and respiratory disease mortality in men decreased with more access to green urban spaces. Males living in the greenest urban areas in the UK had a 5 percent lower risk of cardiovascular disease mortality and 11 percent lower risk of respiratory disease mortality than those in the least green areas.²
- » Patients in hospital rooms facing a park had a 10 percent faster recovery and needed 50 percent less strong pain medication, compared to patients whose rooms faced a building wall.³
- » In King County, Washington, a 5 percent increase in walkability was associated with a 0.23 point reduction in BMI, and a 32.1 percent increase in time spent in active travel.⁴
- » For individuals with arthritis, walking can help reduce pain, as well as improve mobility and quality of life.⁵
- » Children today experience record levels of obesity and preventable diseases like hypertension and Type II Diabetes, caused in part by a decrease in physical activity and increase in processed food consumption. Using parks programming to help children move more and eat healthily can help children fight these diseases and live longer.⁶
- » A study conducted on Seattle's park and recreation system revealed that the city's residents were able to save \$64 million in medical costs as a result of getting physical activity in the parks.⁷



SOURCES

- ¹ Active Living Research (2015). Making the Case for Designing Active Cities. (NRPA Report, 2010).
- ² Active Living Research (2015). Making the Case for Designing Active Cities. (Richardson & Mitchell, 2010).
- ³ Active Living Research (2015). Making the Case for Designing Active Cities. (Bolund, 1999).
- ⁴ Active Living Research (2015). Making the Case for Designing Active Cities. (Frank, et al, 2006).
- ⁵ Callahan LF, Shreffler JH, Altpeter M, et al. (2011). Evaluation of group and self-directed formats of the Arthritis Foundation's Walk With Ease program. Arthritis Care and Research, 63(8): 1098-1107.
- ⁶ NRPA. (2015). How Parks Create Healthier Communities: An Overview of NRPA's Miami Innovation Lab.
- ⁷ The Trust for Public Land. (2011). The Economic Benefits of Seattle's Park and Recreation System.