



# Trees and Green Space: A Healthy Prescription

“Research tells us that urban greening should not be just an incidental, occasional program in cities, but merits comprehensive planning and management to generate all the benefits.”

*Kathleen L. Wolf, Ph.D.  
Research Social Scientist  
College of Forest Resources  
University of Washington*



Trees Forever is dedicated to building a better world for future generations. Our green space projects encourage communities to become healthier by increasing the number of people who get outside to exercise and mentally recharge.

## Why Trees Matter to Health

Trees and green space are essential to our well-being. Beautiful tree-lined streets encourage walking. Shaded, lush yards and parks entice families and children to spend more time outdoors. Recreational trails with natural landscaping are key to people spending more time on bicycles, running and walking. Equally as important, trees and green space naturally restore us emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

As poor health reaches epidemic levels across the United States, we recognize that exercise, healthy eating, low stress levels, and social connections are key elements for living a happy, healthy life. Equally important is “Vitamin N” or Nature. Some doctors are beginning to prescribe time outdoors rather than increasing medications for children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder.



“ It is important for people to be able to walk out their doors into spaces with some greenness. Daily contact makes a significant difference in a range of ways and at different ages. ”

*Dr. William C. Sullivan  
Professor and Director of the  
Sustainability and Health Lab,  
University of Illinois*



### A Daily Dose of “Vitamin N”

The facts are in. A daily dose of “Vitamin N” – Vitamin Nature – is essential for your health.

- People who use parks and open spaces are three times more likely to achieve recommended levels of physical activity than nonusers. However, physical inactivity costs Iowa about \$4.6 billion annually in lost worker productivity.<sup>1</sup>
- Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years. Active living is one solution to reverse this trend. Trees contribute to perceptions of more walkable streets, which can promote more physical activity in children and youth.<sup>2</sup>
- All other things being equal, patients with bedside windows looking out on leafy trees healed, on average, a day faster, needed significantly less pain medication, and had fewer postsurgical complications.<sup>3</sup>
- Workers with workstation views that included green elements were more satisfied at work and had more patience, less frustration, increased enthusiasm for work, and fewer health problems. Not having nature views is associated with higher levels of tension and anxiety in office workers.<sup>4</sup>

Together we can promote the healthy prescription of “Vitamin N” and increase the health of our communities through a focused effort on trees and green space that encourages people to get outside to exercise and mentally recharge. Healthy trees mean healthy people.

<sup>1</sup> Economic Value of Outdoor Recreation Activities in Iowa: Daniel Otto, Kristin Tylka, and Susan Erickson

<sup>2</sup> [depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm\\_ActiveLiving.html](https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm_ActiveLiving.html)

<sup>3</sup> [www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=nature-that-nurtures](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=nature-that-nurtures)

<sup>4</sup> [depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm\\_Mental.html](https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm_Mental.html)

Join Trees Forever on its mission to plant and care for trees and the environment by empowering people, building community and promoting stewardship.

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