

What do we know about the impact of outdoor interventions on health?

Evidence suggests that outdoor interventions can positively impact human health and wellbeing.

Spending time in natural environments has been shown to encourage **higher levels of physical activity among children** and adolescents ([Natural England, 2024](#)).

Access to **green spaces** — especially in urban environments — has been linked to enhanced **mental wellbeing, increased physical activity**, and associated health benefits ([Natural England, 2024](#); [PHE, 2020](#)).

Nature-based interventions are associated with **psychological benefits**, including alleviating symptoms of depression and **enhancing overall mood** ([Natural England, 2024](#)).

An increasing body of research highlights that being near **blue spaces** — such as rivers, lakes, or the sea — can support **wellbeing and promote physical activity** ([Natural England, 2024](#)).

Improvements in areas such as **neighbourhood design, housing, food environments, natural spaces, and transport infrastructure** can promote healthier behaviours, reduce health risks, and **enhance overall quality of life** ([PHE, 2017](#)).

Encouraging active travel (walking, cycling or wheeling) can contribute to an **overall increase in physical activity**, supporting better health outcomes including improved metabolic health, reduced risk of some diseases and mental health benefits ([NICE, 2012](#); [PHE, 2018](#)).



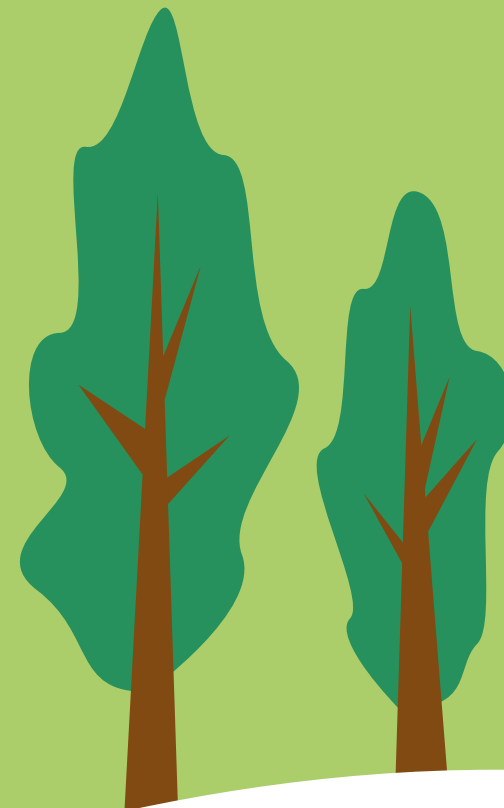
Where can I read more about the current evidence?

The following reports are all reviews of evidence:

- [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(2012\) Physical activity: walking and cycling](#)
- [Natural England \(2024\) NEER030 A narrative review of reviews of nature exposure and human health and wellbeing in the UK](#)
- [Public Health England \(2017\) Spatial planning for health: evidence review](#)
- [Public Health England \(2018\) Cycling and walking for individual and population health benefits: A rapid evidence review for health and care system decision-makers](#)
- [Public Health England \(2020\) Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020.](#)
- [Wang X, Feng B and Wang J \(2025\) Green spaces, blue spaces and human health: an updated umbrella review of epidemiological meta-analyses. Front. Public Health 13:1505292.](#)

The infographic overleaf is taken from **Healthy Outdoors - A guide for measuring health outcomes when evaluating outdoor interventions**. [Natural England Commissioned Report NECR725](#). This guide was produced by Natural England in collaboration with cross government partners from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Sport England, Active Travel England and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, to help organisations consistently and effectively measure the impact of outdoor interventions on people's health and wellbeing.

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