



# Healthy nature healthy people: 'contact with nature' as an upstream health promotion intervention for populations.

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### Abstract

Whilst urban-dwelling individuals who seek out parks and gardens appear to intuitively understand the personal health and well-being benefits arising from 'contact with nature', public health strategies are yet to maximize the untapped resource nature provides, including the benefits of nature contact as an upstream health promotion intervention for populations. This paper presents a summary of empirical, theoretical and anecdotal evidence drawn from a literature review of the human health benefits of contact with nature. Initial findings indicate that nature plays a vital role in human health and well-being, and that parks and nature reserves play a significant role by providing access to nature for individuals. Implications suggest contact with nature may provide an effective population-wide strategy in prevention of mental ill health, with potential application for sub-populations, communities and individuals at higher risk of ill health. Recommendations include further investigation of 'contact with nature' in population health, and examination of the benefits of nature-based interventions. To maximize use of 'contact with nature' in the health promotion of populations, collaborative strategies between researchers and primary health, social services, urban planning and environmental management sectors are required. This approach offers not only an augmentation of existing health promotion and prevention activities, but provides the basis for a socio-ecological approach to public health that incorporates environmental sustainability.

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