

Urban green space, health and well-being: A review

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Pressures on green space in and around cities are increasing. To better understand the health implications of these, health units in Ontario have worked with EcoHealth partners to assess the state of evidence on the impacts of green space on health. As part of this effort, Toronto Public Health led a meta-narrative review on the impacts of green space on wellbeing, mental health, birth outcomes, and social cohesion.

Green space is associated with at least 13 different positive health outcomes, including healthier births, reduced morbidity, and decreased stress and violence. The review also found that “nature at your doorstep” may be particularly important to more vulnerable populations, such as people with lower socio-economic status, older adults, children and youth. Increasing access to nearby green space may offer considerable opportunities for reducing health inequalities.

With the shift to greater densities to support mixed use and foster more walkable environments, the integration of green space in the planning debate becomes more important. This review provides evidence to inform policy.

The report will be presented to the June 29, 2015 meeting of the Toronto Board of Health.