

PARKS AND HEALTHY KIDS

Today's youth and teens face a variety of chronic illnesses that have been linked to a lack of activity, poor nutrition and too little time outdoors. Access to parks and recreation programs is integral to overcoming these issues and promoting healthy behaviors in youth.

THE FACTS

- » 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 healthy can help them fight these diseases and live longer.¹
- » Children who live within two-thirds of a mile from a park with a playground are five times more likely to be a healthy weight. Time spent outside leads to higher levels of physical activity in children.²
- » A 20-minute walk in a park or other natural area can help children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder focus better.³
- » Active children show more brain activity, and they are 20 percent more likely to earn an A in English or math.⁴
- » Seventy-six percent of recreation and park agencies offer summer camps, which provide some form of active programming for children, and 50 percent of those agencies also provide healthy feeding programs for park participants.⁵
- » Youth living in neighborhoods with multiple recreation and park facilities are more likely to be active five times a week, compared to young people who don't have access to any.⁶ Unfortunately, young people who live in poor or mostly minority neighborhoods are 50 percent less likely to have a recreation and park facility near their homes.⁷



SOURCES

- ¹ NRPA. (2015). How parks create healthier communities: An overview of NRPA's Miami Innovation Lab.
- ² National Environmental Education Foundation. Infographic: Children & Nature.
- ³ Taylor AF, Kuo FE. (2009). Children with attention deficits concentrate better after walk in the park. *Journal of Attention Disorders*: 12(5): 402-409.
- ⁴ Nelson MC, Gordon-Larson P. (2006). Physical activity and sedentary behavior patterns are associated with selected adolescent health risk behaviors. *Pediatrics*, 117: 1281-1290.
- ⁵ NRPA. (2014). PRORAGIS: The Role of Park and Recreation Agencies in Fighting Childhood Hunger Issues.
- ⁶ Gordon-Larsen P, Nelson M, Page P, et al. (2006). Inequality in the built environment underlies key health disparities in physical activity and obesity. *Pediatrics*, 117(2), 417-424.
- ⁷ Huston S, Evenson K, Bors P, et al. (2003). Neighborhood Environment, access to places for activity, and leisure-time physical activity in a diverse North Carolina population. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 18(1): 58-69.