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Woodland gives city kids better mental health – 23rd July, 2021

Level 0

Woodland gives children in cities better mental health and thinking skills. Researchers said a natural environment is important for a child's development. The researchers said seeing and hearing the sounds of nature helps the mental health of children in and improves their learning.

Researchers studied children at 31 schools in London over four years. They looked at how woodland affected children's health. Children near woodland got higher scores on tests. They also had a lower risk of behavioural problems. A researcher said children should enjoy "the sights, sounds and smells of a forest" every day.

Level 1

Researchers say city woodland gives children better mental health. Children who experience the great outdoors also have better thinking skills. The researchers said their research helped them to understand that the natural environment is "an important protective factor for [a child's] cognitive development and mental health". They said seeing and hearing the sounds of nature gives children in cities psychological benefits.

The four-year study involved 3,568 children at 31 schools in London. Researchers calculated how woodland, parks, and "blue space" like rivers, lakes and the sea, affected children's health. Children who visited woodland every day scored higher on memory-based tests. They also had a 17 per cent lower risk of behavioural problems. A researcher said all children should experience "forest bathing" and enjoy "the sights, sounds and smells of a forest".

Level 2

Woodland in cities gives children better mental health. Researchers say children who visit and experience the great outdoors every day also have better thinking skills. Researchers from University College London looked at how woodland benefits city children. They said their research helped their understanding "of the natural environment as an important protective factor for [a child's] cognitive development and mental health". They added that seeing and hearing the sounds of nature provides psychological benefits for children, especially those in cities.

In their four-year study, researchers studied 3,568 children at 31 schools in London. They looked at how the natural environment affected thinking skills and mental health. They calculated how woodland, parks, and "blue space" like rivers, lakes and the sea, affected children's health. The children took memory-based tests. Those who visited woodland every day scored higher on the tests and had a 17 per cent lower risk of behavioural problems. A researcher said all children should experience "forest bathing". This is enjoying "the sights, sounds and smells of a forest".

Level 3

Children who live near woodland in a city have better mental health than children who do not. Researchers say children who visit and experience the great outdoors every day develop better thinking skills. They also have a lower risk of behavioural and emotional problems. Lead author of the research Mikael Maes, from University College London, talked about his research. He said: "These findings contribute to our understanding of the natural environment as an important protective factor for [a child's] cognitive development and mental health." Another report author, Professor Kate Jones, said seeing and hearing the sounds of nature provides psychological benefits for children.

In the four-year study, researchers studied 3,568 children aged between 9 and 15 at 31 schools in London. They examined the links between the natural environment and thinking skills, mental health and overall well-being. The researchers calculated how going to woodland and parks, and "blue space" like rivers, lakes and the sea, affected children's health. They asked children to take memory-based tests. The children who visited woodland every day scored higher on the tests. They also had a 17 per cent lower risk of emotional and behavioural problems. Mr Maes recommended all children experience "forest bathing" or "forest therapy". This is "being immersed in the sights, sounds and smells of a forest".