

The benefits of spending time in nature

There is an emerging body of local and international research linking childhood contact with nature to a wide range of benefits in human health and wellbeing. Planet Ark's 2012 report *Planting trees: just what the doctor ordered* includes two elements:

1. A review of local and international research of the intellectual, psychological, physical and mental health benefits of contact with nature for children.

2. The results of a new Australian study called the *Nature and Children's Health Survey*, which was commissioned by Planet Ark and conducted by research company Pollinate. This survey focuses on

how Australians, particularly those who regularly care for children, perceive the link between nature and children's health, wellbeing and development. Below is a summary of the findings:



Contact with nature is good for mental health - Researchers have found that contact with nature helps reduce stress in children and that a deeper, more active contact with nature can provide children with calming and stabilising memories that they can draw on during stressful periods later in life.

Contact with nature is good for the mind - Research has shown that contact with nature can provide a wealth of learning opportunities and improve academic achievement.

Contact with nature is good for the body - Research has shown a link between body mass index (BMI) scores in children and their access to "green" areas and levels of outdoor play. BMI is often used by health authorities and researchers to indicate healthy weight ranges. In addition, natural environments improve balance and coordination in children and can have a positive impact on eyesight.

Contact with nature is linked to happiness - Research has shown that spending time in nature increases feelings of joy and happiness.