

2018 November Health Notes by Evelyn Ames

The Health Benefits of Trees

"I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees.
I speak for the trees for the trees have no tongues," Dr. Seuss

The closer we live near trees the healthier and happier we are and the longer our lifespans! Not only do trees filter pollutants from the air but they provide psychological benefits. Trees have been shown to improve urban air quality by pulling ozone, particulates, and other pollutants into their leaves and out of the air and thereby partly protecting people from them. It is estimated that \$6.8 billion every year in health costs are prevented or averted in the United States because of the nature and benevolence of trees.

Why are trees beneficial? Suggestions for why better health include improvement in air quality, relief of stress, promotion of physical activity and community relationships, and enhancement of emotional health. A 2010 paper in *Journal of Environmental Psychology* reported trees helped people feel more alive; the *Journal of Landscape and Urban Planning* reported that subjects in a study had decreased levels of cortisol (stress hormone).

According to The Tree People, there are twenty-two benefits of trees. Trees

- combat climate change (absorb CO₂); clean the air (absorb odors and pollutant gasses);
- provide oxygen; cool streets and cities; conserve energy (can cut summer air conditioning up to 50%);
- save water by slowing water evaporation; help prevent water pollution;
- help prevent soil erosion; shield children from ultra-violet rays; provide food (e.g., apples, pears);
- heal (patients with views of trees heal faster and with less complications);
- reduce violence; mark the seasons of winter, spring, summer, and fall);
- create economic opportunities; are teachers and playmates;
- bring diverse groups of people together; add unity (landmarks give neighborhoods identity);
- provide a canopy and habitat for wildlife; block things (e.g., mask concrete walls or parking lots);
- provide wood; increase property values; and more trees and landscaping in a business district bring an increase business traffic.

Sources: <https://www.treepeople.org/tree-benefits>
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2015/07/09/scientists-have-discovered-that-living-near-trees-is-good-for-your-health/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.a7a752be52b8
<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/07/trees-good/375129/>