What is Ecohealth?

Ecohealth is the relationship between human and environmental health.

ECOSYSTEM
- Forests
- Wetlands
- Water
- Soil
- Plants
- Animals

BENEFITS
- Clean air & water
- Food & medicines
- Important natural & wildlife habitat
- Less pollution, drought & heat
- Less mental anxiety
- More social interactions
- More opportunity for physical activity

HEALTHY PEOPLE
- Improved mental & physical wellbeing
- Livable communities

We rely on nature for multiple benefits for both a healthy environment and healthy people.

Climate Change Affects Natural Environments and Human Health

Expected human health impacts include:
- Vector-borne diseases (West Nile virus and Lyme disease)
- Extreme weather impacts (injury and illness due to flooding)
- Temperature related illness (heat stress, hypothermia)
- Air-quality effects (cardiopulmonary diseases, asthma)
- All-quality effects (cardiopulmonary diseases, asthma)
- Water and food contamination

What’s in a Green Space that makes us feel so good?

Living Near Trees & Green Space Has Benefits:

Trees help to improve air quality and combat climate change. Over 80 years, the average Canadian tree absorbs 200 kg of carbon dioxide – plus ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, fine particulate matter and sulphur dioxide.

People who live in neighbourhoods with a higher density of trees on their streets report significantly higher health perception and less metabolic condition.

WHAT'S IN A GREEN SPACE THAT MAKES US FEEL SO GOOD?

Bearing 50% More Natural Areas for Physical Activity

Better Mental Health

Contact with nature (including trees, lakes, rivers, wildlife, blue skies) can provide stress relief, reduce brain fatigue, enhance the five senses, and improve memory, mood, positive thinking, decision-making ability, mental sharpness, creativity, and attention span.

Better Physical Health

Walking outside has been proven to provide physical health benefits such as:
- Improving blood circulation
- Increasing stamina
- Reducing risk factors for cardiovascular and respiratory diseases

Reduce Risk of Chronic Diseases:
Green spaces reduce human exposure to air pollutants, thereby reducing risk factors for cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

Reduce Air Pollution:
Air pollution is a leading cause of death and illness, the single largest contributor to premature death and disability worldwide. Air pollution causes heart disease, stroke, respiratory illness, and premature death.

Five Things You Can Do

1. COLLABORATE across sectors and disciplines (e.g., public health, planning, parks, watershed management, academia) to build awareness and influence the protection and enhancement of green space by highlighting the benefits to human health.
2. ADVOCATE for strengthened green space policies that support healthy communities e.g., provision of shade, heat reduction, improved air quality, active transportation, biodiversity conservation and access to green space.
3. PROMOTE equitable access to green space with a focus on increasing access to vulnerable populations (e.g., seniors, children, and people living on low income).
4. INFLUENCE official plans, watershed plans, and other policies to protect and enhance green space.
5. SHARE information about health evidence for the protection and/or enhancement of green space.

EcoHealth Ontario

EcoHealth Ontario is a collaborative of public health, environmental, planning, parks & education sectors who:
- Develop and share ecohealth research, information, and outreach tools
- Influence policy
- Build a common vision around ecohealth
- Advocate for strengthening of green space policies that support healthy communities
- Promote equitable access to green space with a focus on increasing access to vulnerable populations
- Influence official plans, watershed plans, and other policies to protect and enhance green space
- Share information about health evidence for the protection and/or enhancement of green space
- Collaborate across sectors and disciplines to build awareness and influence the protection and enhancement of green space by highlighting the benefits to human health

EcoHealth Ontario gratefully acknowledges the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Health Canada, and our Steering Committee members for their generous support of our work.

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Some Challenges

- ADHD
- 5-10% of Earth’s Ice
- 23% of the world’s food is lost
- 9 MILLION+ People are Diabetic
- 1,300 7 MINUTES
- 36.6% Life Stress

Who is EcoHealth Ontario? ecohealth-ontario.on.ca