

The 3–30–300 Nature Recommendation

A simple guideline for nature exposure and well-being



MEIJÄN POLKU
Liikunta, lepo, luonto, yhteisöllisyys



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A simple guideline for nature exposure and well-being.

This English-language version is based on the Finnish “3–30–300 Luontosuositus”, authored by Juho Jäppinen, Meijän polku.

www.meijanpolku.fi/3-30-300-nature-recommendation

This publication provides general guidance on nature exposure and well-being. It is not intended as medical advice or a substitute for professional healthcare.

When spending time in natural environments, individuals should consider local conditions, natural features and weather, and follow guidance provided by local authorities and outdoor organisations where relevant.

Research basis

This recommendation is based on international research showing that regular exposure to natural environments supports mental and physical health, reduces stress and supports recovery. The benefits increase with regular and repeated contact.

ISBN 978-952-65612-2-6

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Spend time in natural environments
at least 3 times per week



Stay in nature for at least
30 minutes at a time



Aim for a total of
300 minutes per week

3-30-300
NATURE
RECOMMENDATION

Human well-being is deeply connected to nature. Despite this, modern lifestyles have significantly reduced our daily contact with diverse natural environments. Urbanisation, car dependency and increasingly indoor-centred routines mean that many people spend less time outdoors than ever before.

Research shows that reduced contact with nature is linked to growing health challenges, including stress, mental health problems and lifestyle-related diseases such as cardiovascular illnesses and type 2 diabetes. At the same time, the health-promoting effects of nature are well documented: regular exposure to natural environments supports physical health, mental recovery and overall quality of life. In particular, contact with biodiverse environments supports the human microbiome and may contribute to disease prevention.

Increasing everyday nature exposure is therefore not only a personal well-being choice, but also a public health priority.



Why do we need a nature recommendation?



The 3–30–300 Nature Recommendation offers a simple and practical guideline for increasing nature exposure in everyday life. It is inspired by the internationally recognised 3–30–300 model used in urban planning to improve access to green spaces.

The recommendation:

- **Spend time in natural environments at least 3 times per week**
- **Stay in nature for at least 30 minutes at a time**
- **Aim for a total of 300 minutes per week.**

The recommendation is primarily aimed at adults. For children and young people, even more time outdoors is encouraged whenever possible.



What is the 3–30–300 Nature Recommendation?



Time spent in nature benefits both mind and body. Even short visits can support recovery from stress, improve mood and increase feelings of calm and vitality.

Research indicates that:

- **Natural environments reduce stress and support emotional balance**
- **Regular exposure to nature lowers blood pressure and heart rate**
- **Exposure to green and blue environments supports mental resilience**
- **Natural environments encourage physical activity and often make it feel easier and more enjoyable**
- **Exposure to biodiverse environments supports the human microbiome and may contribute to disease prevention**
- **Repeated and regular exposure produces the strongest long-term benefits.**

Health benefits begin within minutes of exposure and increase as visits become more frequent and habitual.



Health and well-being benefits of nature



While health benefits can be observed after only a few minutes outdoors, studies suggest that reaching around 120 minutes of nature exposure per week is associated with markedly better well-being. Beyond this threshold, benefits remain high up to around 300 minutes per week.

Five hours per week may sound like a lot, but when divided across the week it equals roughly 40 minutes per day – about the length of a daily walk. At the same time, adults typically spend several hours each day sitting or using screens, often accumulating 6–8 hours or more of sedentary time daily.

In this context, a daily nature visit of 30–40 minutes is relatively small, yet highly beneficial for health and well-being.

The key message is simple: **every moment in nature counts.**



How long is “enough”?



Does it matter what you do in nature?



No. What matters most is being in nature, not performance or intensity.

Natural environments support well-being regardless of activity type or intensity. You can:

- **Walk, cycle or exercise**
- **Sit, rest or read**
- **Garden or do yard work**
- **Observe landscapes, plants and animals**
- **Simply pause and do nothing.**

Choose activities that feel enjoyable and meaningful to you. Places that feel pleasant or personally important encourage longer and more frequent visits.

At the same time, engaging in physical activity in natural environments combines the benefits of nature exposure with those of movement, providing additional support for health and overall well-being.



Everyday nature and nearby environments



Most people accumulate the majority of their nature exposure close to home. Nearby green and blue spaces play a particularly important role in daily well-being.

Accessible local nature:

- **Lowers barriers to daily outdoor activity**
- **Supports all age groups**
- **Reduces the need for long travel**
- **Encourages regular and repeated exposure**
- **Enables physically active time outdoors, combining the benefits of nature exposure and physical activity.**

Creating and maintaining diverse and accessible natural environments close to where people live, work and study is a key factor in supporting public health.



Nature and physical activity reinforce each other. Natural environments encourage people to move more, for longer and with greater enjoyment.

Most physical activity recommendations can be fulfilled outdoors. Many familiar forms of exercise can easily be transferred into natural environments—for example, strength training can be done using body weight or natural elements, a stationary bike can be replaced with cycling outdoors, and a stepper workout with walking uphill or climbing outdoor stairs. These alternatives often provide not only similar physical benefits, but also additional mental and restorative effects.

Building new habits takes time, but regular routines—such as spending time in nature several times per week—can gradually become part of everyday life and support long-term health and well-being.

Over time, integrating nature and movement into daily routines contributes to a healthier, more balanced lifestyle that supports both physical and mental well-being.



Nature, movement and habits



A shared responsibility



Increasing nature exposure is not only an individual choice—it is also shaped by our environments. Urban planning, workplaces, schools and communities all influence how easily people can access nature.

Nature-based solutions support biodiversity, climate resilience, health and social cohesion. Improving access to diverse natural environments benefits individuals, communities and society as a whole.

At the same time, engaging in collective nature-based activities—such as ecological restoration, habitat management or community greening—can strengthen social connections, increase nature exposure and support both human and environmental well-being. These activities offer meaningful ways for people to actively contribute to the health of natural environments.

Throughout history, humans have benefited from nature in countless ways. Today, there is a growing need to also support the well-being of nature itself by protecting, restoring and enhancing biodiversity.



Nature Contact Across the Life Course



Supporting well-being, learning and health at every stage of life

Increasing regular contact with nearby, biodiverse nature benefits people of all ages. Accessible green and blue environments support physical health, mental well-being and immune function throughout the life course.

Nature-based solutions also help societies adapt to challenges such as climate change, urban heat and population ageing. In addition, opportunities to participate in ecological restoration and biodiversity enhancement should be promoted, allowing people to contribute to the health of natural environments while strengthening their connection to nature and fostering social cohesion.

Early childhood (pre-school age)



Nature connection develops and strengthens in early childhood. Young children benefit especially from frequent, varied and hands-on interactions with nature.

Key ways to support nature contact:

- **Integrate nature into everyday life through families, caregivers and early childhood education**
- **Green daycare yards by adding forest soil, diverse vegetation and natural materials**
- **Ensure safe and easy access to nearby natural environments**
- **Support nature contact in home environments by increasing biodiversity and bringing natural elements into yards, gardens and shared residential spaces.**

Research shows that increasing contact with biodiverse environments in early childhood can strengthen immune system regulation and potentially reduce the risk of allergies and autoimmune diseases. Most importantly, time spent in natural environments encourages diverse physical activity, supports learning, and fosters the development of autonomy and agency.

Children of school age



For school-aged children, nature contact supports learning, physical activity, emotional regulation and independent action.

Key ways to support nature contact:

- **Make nature part of the daily school routine (e.g. outdoor classes and regular outdoor learning)**
- **Ensure green schoolyards and nature-rich break areas**
- **Encourage active and safe school travel through green routes and supportive mobility environments**
- **Support and enable families to spend more time in nature together and strengthen everyday nature contact**
- **Promote opportunities for self-directed exploration, play and learning in natural environments.**

Regular exposure to natural environments during the school years helps increase physical activity, supports learning and independent engagement with the environment, and establishes lifelong habits of outdoor activity and connection with nature.

Adolescents and young people



Although most young people still spend time in nature, adolescence is often a period when both physical activity and nature contact decrease.

Key ways to support nature contact:

- **Provide easily accessible, appealing and biodiverse natural environments near schools and study settings**
- **Encourage short but regular nature visits**
- **Combine nature contact with social activities and active movement**
- **Enable and support participation in nature-based hobbies and activities that are meaningful and appealing to young people**
- **Create inviting learning and leisure environments where contact with nature occurs naturally as part of everyday life**
- **Encourage active mobility and reduce reliance on passive transport (e.g. scooters and car transport), especially in everyday travel**

Studies show that even brief visits to nature can improve mood, reduce stress and support mental health, which is particularly important given the rising prevalence of mental health challenges among young people.

For working-age adults, increased nature contact can significantly improve perceived well-being and health.

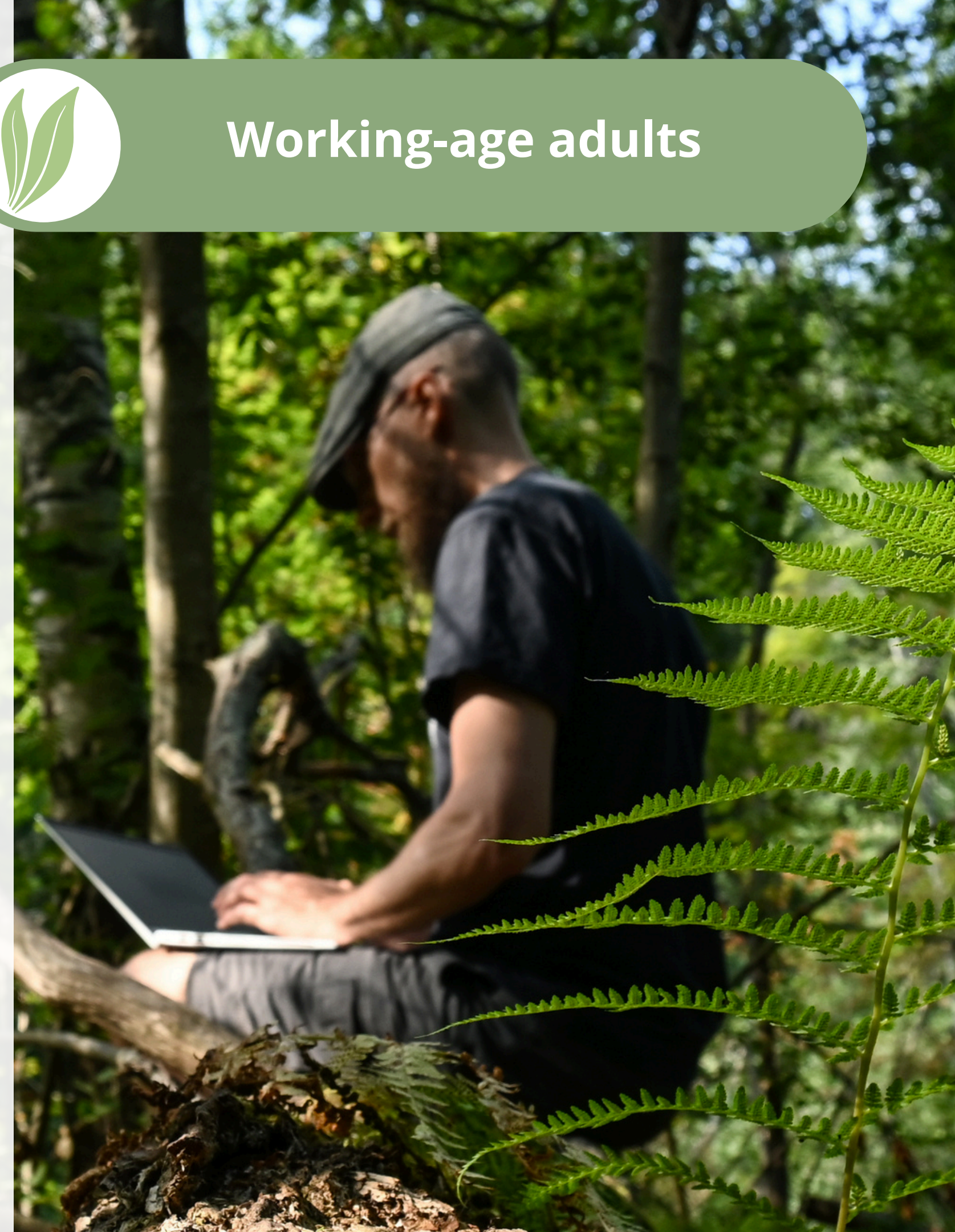


Working-age adults

Key ways to support nature contact:

- **Increase awareness of the health and well-being benefits of natural environments**
- **Support active commuting (e.g. walking or cycling) through green and nature-rich environments that offer everyday exposure to nature.**
- **Promote nature-based hobbies and recreation**
- **Enable participation in activities that enhance biodiversity and support ecological restoration in both home environments and the wider community**
- **Encourage workplaces to increase opportunities for nature contact in both indoor and outdoor environments such as walking meetings, outdoor office days and working in nature**

Combining commuting, errands and leisure activities with natural environments helps adults meet both physical activity and nature exposure recommendations with minimal extra effort.



As functional capacity changes with age, accessible, safe and well-maintained nearby nature becomes increasingly important.



Older adults and seniors

Key ways to support nature contact:

- **Ensure barrier-free access to green spaces close to home**
- **Maintain high-quality, year-round walking paths and resting places**
- **Support social outdoor activities, group excursions and intergenerational nature experiences**
- **Promote gardening and yard work as meaningful forms of nature contact**
- **Increase biodiversity in nearby home environments and residential surroundings**
- **Provide information on the health and well-being benefits of nature, as well as on accessible nearby nature destinations**
- **Improve public transport connections to natural areas (“nature stops”) to enable safe and sustainable access.**

Accessible local nature and supportive environments play a key role in maintaining physical activity, social connections and overall well-being in older age.

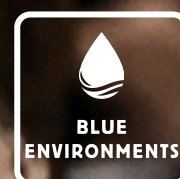


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Start today! Small steps can make a big difference.



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