



01 - WOODLAND GIVES CITY KIDS BETTER MENTAL HEALTH



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".