



## Green exercise is good for the body and mind

There are more benefits to gardening than seeing a lush garden full of colorful flowers or tasty vegetables. People who participate in “green exercise” also experience a number of health benefits.

Green exercise, also known as gardening, is good for both physical and mental health. Older adults who gardened regularly reported less perceived stress than indoor exercisers with the same level of reported physical activity. As little as five minutes of green exercise improved both self-esteem and mood.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity each week. Digging in the garden to create a new garden plot is a great way to meet this recommendation. The CDC also recommends 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week. Most other gardening activities fall into this category of moderate exercise. It won't be long until the leaves start falling from the trees and providing yet another opportunity to get outdoors and get your heart rate up a bit.

Children ages 3-11 can also benefit from gardening and can reach the CDC's recommendation of 60 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity by raking, digging, mulching and hand weeding.

Did you know spending just five minutes making a garden bed is the metabolic equivalent of five minutes of repeating a squat, a row or 15 lateral raises with a two-pound dumbbell in each hand? Also, gardening has a positive effect on body mass index reduction.

Most everyone is familiar with the health benefits of eating fruits and vegetables, and research shows gardening can change your eating habits. Gardeners say they are increasing their consumption of vegetables, trying new vegetables, and decreasing their processed food and meat consumption.

In addition, gardeners consume more fruits and vegetables than their non-gardening counterparts, regardless of how long they've been gardening. Research shows that those who get involved in gardening later in life boost their produce consumption.

For those who may not have room for a garden or have little gardening experience, becoming involved in a community garden is a good way to gain gardening skills. Households that participate in community garden efforts are more likely to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

Working on your body and mind doesn't always require a gym membership. A rake, a trowel and a pair of gardening gloves can get you on your way to better mental and physical health.