

Living close to green spaces is associated with better attention in children

26 October 2017



Child and green spaces. Credit: michael-podger/Creative commons

Natural surroundings, including green spaces, may be beneficial for brain development in children, but evidence is still limited. A previous ISGlobal study indicated that green spaces within and surrounding schools could enhance cognitive development in children between seven and 10 years of age. In the current study, the authors expanded on this finding by evaluating the impact of greenness surrounding all the residential addresses of children since birth and characterizing cognitive development at earlier stages in life.

The analysis, published in *Environment Health Perspectives*, was based on data from 1,500 [children](#) of the INMA - Environment and Childhood Project cohort in Sabadell and Valencia, collected during 2003-2013. The ISGlobal team analysed surrounding greenness at 100, 300 and 500 metres distance near the homes of children at birth, four to five years old, and seven years old. Two types of attention tests were performed at four to five years and seven years of age. The research shows that children with higher greenness around their homes had better scores in the attention

tests.

Payam Davvand, ISGlobal researcher and first author of the study, says, "This is the first time that the impact of lifelong residential exposure to green spaces on attention capacity in children has been studied." These results "underline the importance of green areas in cities for children's health and [brain development](#)," says Davvand.

Jordi Sunyer, study coordinator and head of the Child Health Programme at ISGlobal, points out that "the possibility that exposure to different types of vegetation might have different impacts on neurodevelopment remains an open question." Therefore, Sunyer believes further studies should be done in other settings with different climates and vegetation.

"Green spaces in cities promote social connections and physical activity and reduce exposure to air pollution and noise, and are therefore essential for the development of future generations' brains," adds the study coordinator.

More information: Payam Davvand et al, Lifelong Residential Exposure to Green Space and Attention: A Population-based Prospective Study, *Environmental Health Perspectives* (2017). [DOI: 10.1289/EHP694](#)

Provided by Barcelona Institute for Global Health

APA citation: Living close to green spaces is associated with better attention in children (2017, October 26) retrieved 30 May 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-10-green-spaces-attention-children.html>

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