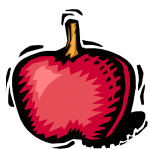


From the Broward County Extension Education Division Service Family and Consumer Science



## Visiting a Park Can Boost Your Health



Have you visited one of Broward County's Parks recently? The parks and recreation services provided by Broward County Parks and Recreation Division play a vital role in creating active and healthy communities. It is a widely accepted fact that physical activity is a key element of good health. The evidence is more convincing than ever that people of all ages who are generally *not* active can improve their health through physical activity, which can help to:

- Control weight
- Control high blood pressure.
- Reduce the risk for type 2 diabetes, heart attack, and colon cancer.
- Reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Reduce arthritis pain and disability.
- Prevent osteoporosis and falls.

Some facts from the National Recreation and Park Association that convey the benefits of visiting a park include the following:

- Two-thirds of older adults who visit parks report moderate or high levels of physical activity during their visit.
- Active users of public parks have a lower body mass index (a ratio between weight and height) than do people who use parks passively or not at all.
- People who visited parks for longer periods of time (one hour or more) had significantly lower blood pressure than those who only stayed for short periods of time.
- Stress relief, clearing one's mind, and exercise were the most common benefits that older adults attributed to their park visits.

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- Citizens who had better access to parks, visited parks more frequently, and engaged in physically active park behaviors also made fewer visits to their doctor.

The best exercise is one that you will do. Walking is one of the best choices because it's easy, safe, and inexpensive. Here are some tips to help you get moving:

- Choose something you like to do. You will be more likely to stick with it.
- Exercising with someone else can make it more fun. Find a partner.
- Don't get discouraged. Set realistic exercise goals for yourself.
- Talk to your doctor about how much exercise is right for you.
- Make exercise a habit and to think of it as fun. People who are active are usually happier people.
- Visit parks on the web @ [www.broward.org/parks](http://www.broward.org/parks) to find a park near you.



Prepared by:  
Broward County Extension Education Division  
Brenda Marty-Jimenez, MHM, RD, LD/N  
Extension Agent, Family and Consumer Sciences  
3245 College Avenue  
Davie, FL 33314-7719

Phone: 954-370-3725 ext. 251  
Fax: 954-370-3737  
[bjimenez@broward.org](mailto:bjimenez@broward.org)

