



Nature Prescribing

A Toolkit for Child and
Adolescent Healthcare
Providers



Western
HealthSciences



C2EHC CLIMATE CHANGE,
ENVIRONMENT &
HEALTH COLLABORATIVE





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Joint first authors*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE & LEADERSHIP



We write this acknowledgement on behalf of all of us involved in the co-creation of this toolkit and who are part of the Land-Based Healing | Nature for Healing team that was initially formed at Children’s Hospital LHSC.

We express our sincere gratitude to the many other Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, Community Members, Youth, Parents, Healthcare Providers, & Leaders who shared their time, Knowledge, experience, and ideas to inspire this program and everything that comes with it. A huge amount of gratitude is extended to those with whom we share membership in this team; we benefit from your direction and wisdom as we converse, ideate, and, create together.

The lands that this toolkit was created on are the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron peoples. We acknowledge all the treaties that are specific to this area: the Two Row Wampum Belt Treaty of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy/Silver Covenant Chain; the Beaver Hunting Grounds of the Haudenosaunee NANFAN Treaty of 1701; the McKee Treaty of 1790, the London Township Treaty of 1796, the Huron Tract Treaty of 1827, with the Anishinaabeg, and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum of the Anishnaabek and Haudenosaunee.

This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous people (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors to society. We acknowledge and give thanks to the three Indigenous Nations, with each their unique language, culture, ceremonies, and history, who continue to be traditional caretakers of the land in and around what is now named London, Ontario: the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and the Munsee-Delaware Nation.



Chippewas of the Thames First Nation



Oneida Nation of the Thames



Munsee-Delaware Nation



The following are links to local Indigenous Initiatives:



Environment at Oneida



Chippewas of the Thames First Nation Events



Oneida Traditional Healing



Munsee-Delaware Nation Programs (includes Health & Wellness)

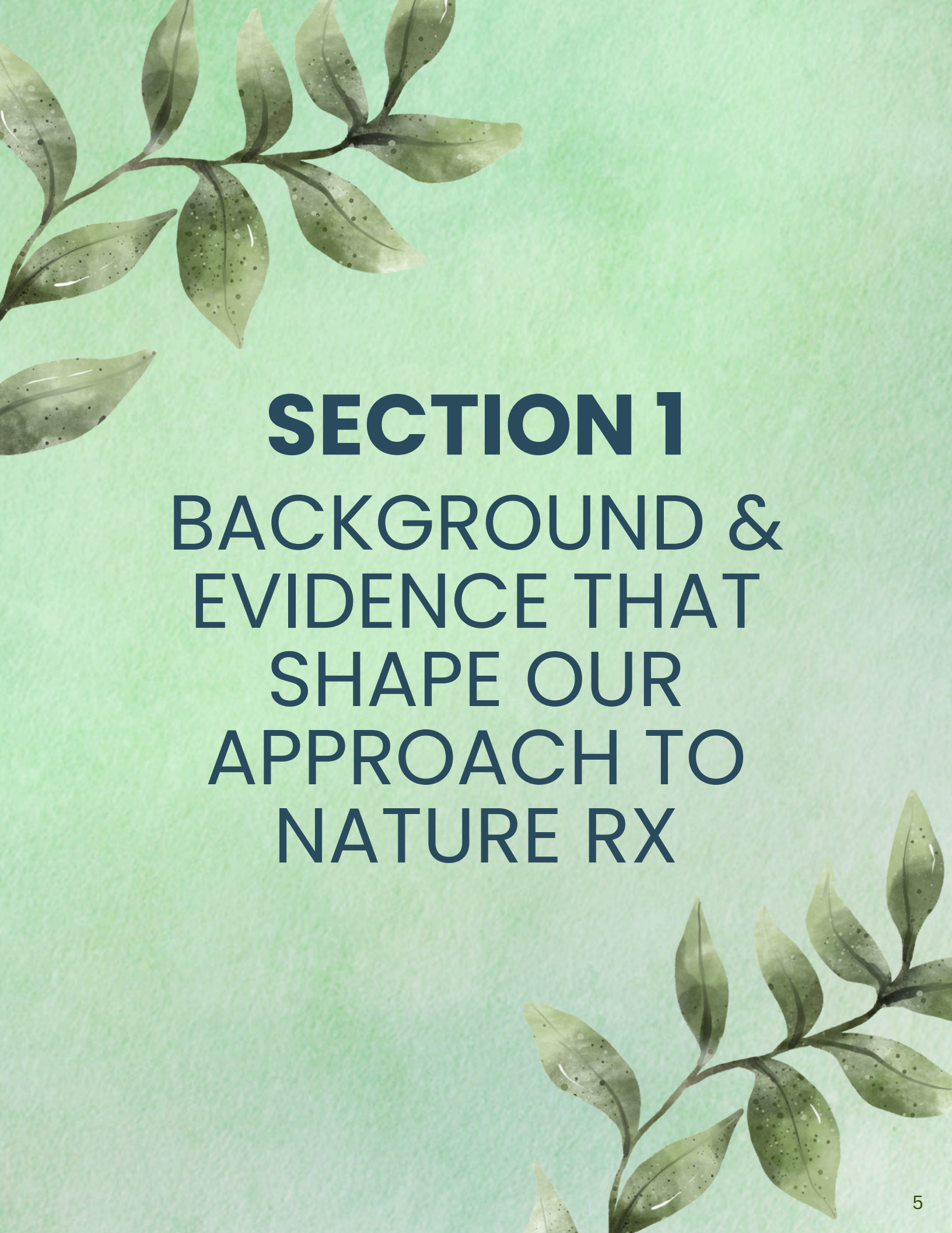


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SECTION 1

BACKGROUND & EVIDENCE THAT SHAPE OUR APPROACH TO NATURE RX



About the Nature Rx Toolkit

Co-Designed with Shared Voices & Shared Vision

This toolkit was developed to assist healthcare providers in prescribing Nature Connections (Nature Rx) to children and adolescents. It is applicable to individuals of all ages.

The request for this toolkit emerged from a comprehensive co-design process involving a diverse group of participants. Contributors included youth with lived illness experience, healthcare professionals from various disciplines, and a dedicated team of researchers and students. Healthcare providers told us they were eager to prescribe nature to enhance their patients' health and well-being but were uncertain about where to begin. Youth participants indicated a desire to engage in Nature Rx, yet cautioned that they wanted to ensure their healthcare providers had appropriate knowledge, training, and experience.

Together, the participants co-created and shaped the resources, ideas, and tools in this toolkit. This toolkit was designed to be practical, relevant, and rooted in real experiences.

We hope you find this helpful!



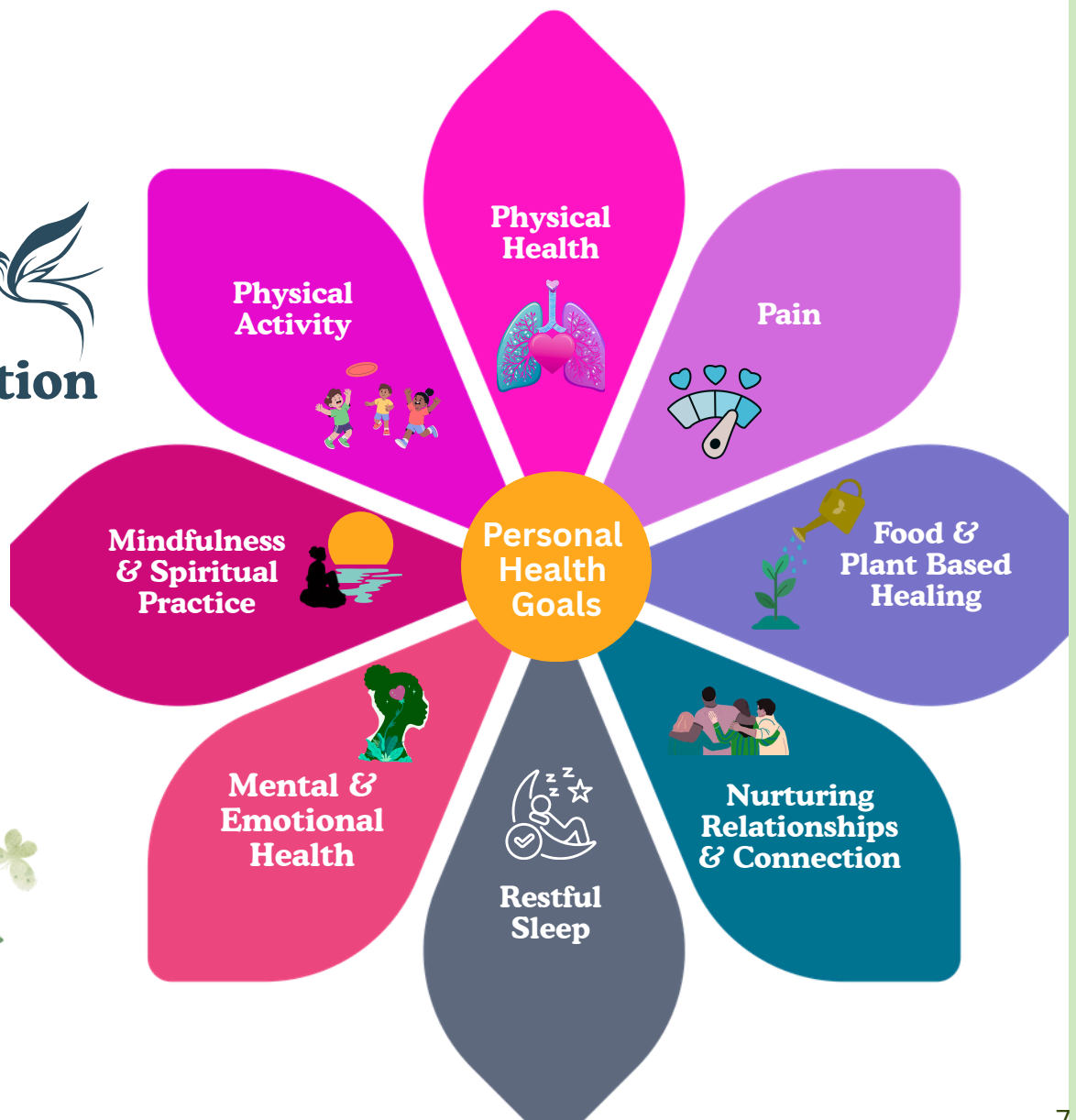
WHAT IS A NATURE PRESCRIPTION?

Nature Prescriptions involve a health provider, a social provider, or an educator recommending time in, and connection with nature. They are a form of social prescribing that are gaining in popularity because of the many mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health benefits.

Nature Rx can support holistic health and be individually tailored to support different health goals for health maintenance, illness prevention and/or symptom management.

- 1) Individuals work with their provider to identify their health goals.
- 2) Nature connections are integrated into the activity & prescription.

Nature Prescription





LAND BASED HEALING

NICOLE YAWNEY MSW RSW SAULTEAUX IKWEWAK FROM
FISHING LAKE FIRST NATION, TREATY 4 TERRITORY

The relationship between nature and our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health is fundamental to many ancestral teachings and Indigenous knowledge systems. The larger program and community that this toolkit was created from is called Land Based Healing | Nature for Healing, intentionally positioning Indigenous Land-Based Practices first, to honour this Knowledge.

Land Based Healing is a holistic approach to wellness and healing with the land. **Interconnectedness** is fundamental to Indigenous worldviews; all elements of existence – animals, plants, people, and the land--are interwoven and dependent on one another.

Centuries of colonial acts have severed Indigenous peoples from Traditional territories, Knowledge, Community and Ceremony. Inflicted violence from colonization and oppressive systems continued with forced assimilation programs, such as the Residential School system, broken treaties and the Indian Act.

Healing and Reconciliation

Understanding the history of the land and the evolution of the Crown/State-Indigenous relationship is a personal responsibility. In this way, reconciliation is an action and an individual commitment to learning the history and present day policy impacting Indigenous peoples. It is knowing about where you stand on the land.

Stewardship is a universal responsibility to care for the land because the land provides everything necessary for survival (water, food, shelter). Finding peace in water, in the tree line, is a “universal knowledge”; a reflection on how non-Indigenous individuals can practice better stewardship and find their own solace in nature without appropriating specific cultural ceremonies.



**For more information on Land Based Healing, please
see resources in the appendix (p. 34)**

PRIMER: NATURE CONNECTIONS & HEALTH

There is substantial literature that explores the impact of nature connections on health. Although evidence for children and youth continues to grow, most studies to date have focused on adult populations. Many of these studies standardize nature interventions, in cohorts, such as type of intervention, length & frequency, and detect quantifiable differences in biomarkers or other health outcomes.



Health Benefits of Connecting with Nature

Mental Health Benefits:

- **Reducing anxiety & depression**^{1,2}
- Improving stress,² boosting memory³
- A systematic review & meta-analysis demonstrated the efficacy of horticultural therapy in improving symptoms & rehabilitation outcomes (in-hospital & community programs), as well as social function & quality of life (community programs) in individuals with schizophrenia⁴

Physical Health Benefits:

- Reduced blood pressure¹ and risk of developing heart disease & diabetes⁵
- A systematic review & meta-analysis found various nature-based interventions improved physical health outcomes (i.e., gastrointestinal, nervous system, musculoskeletal health)⁶



Child & Adolescent Health Benefits

Evidence suggests that nature exposure has many benefits on the health and wellbeing of children and young people, including:

- Improving concentration⁷
- Improving positive emotions⁷
- Improving attentional control⁵
- Reducing symptoms of depression⁸
- Reducing distress⁹
- Reducing ADHD symptomatology¹⁰

The Importance of Connection

Emerging evidence suggests there may be a positive correlation between how strongly people feel *connected with nature* and better-rated mental health.¹¹ In addition, the type of nature connection can influence a person's sense of connection to nature, favouring mindfulness & wildlife encounters over gardening & captive encounters.¹²



THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTION IN NATURE RX

Our Approach to Nature Prescribing

In the co-design of nature prescriptions with patients, we prioritize the patient's connection with nature by ensuring they are co-created to suit their beliefs, perspectives, preferences, health goals, and experience.

This approach operates under the understanding that the **effectiveness of the nature intervention comes not from a standardized dose, frequency, or generic intervention, but from a feeling of connection to nature.**

While one component of the prescription includes frequency and timing of connections, this is one aspect, alongside four other important components of the prescription, including the type of connection, the location, the type of social connection that is integrated, as well as ensuring personal facilitators and barriers are considered.

Prescription components are described in more detail on Page 13-15.

Ensuring that Rx Conversations are Reciprocal & Respectful

Three Shared Values to Facilitate Nature Rx Co-Creation

Start with Patient Knowledge



Each individual has a pre-existing connection to nature/land/all life. The Nature Rx starts with an exploration of each person's knowledge, perceptions, and beliefs, validating each as important and legitimate

Sharing Knowledge



The Nature Rx conversation is a bi-directional sharing of knowledge about nature connection benefits, guided by available literature, Indigenous Knowledge, experiences, and other ways of knowing. It is possible & probable that individuals receiving the Nature Rx may have more knowledge and/or understanding of the reciprocal relationship between nature/land/all life and health than the provider. This may be especially true if the provider is a settler co-creating a Nature Rx with Indigenous persons who engages in Land-based healing practices.¹³

Co-Creating Nature Connections



Personal health goals are identified through dialogue and nature connections are co-created to support these goals.



SECTION 2

GETTING STARTED WITH NATURE RX

GUIDE TO THE GUIDE

Navigating the Rx Toolkit

Within the following pages, you will find the following tools to support you as you navigate nature prescribing:

Preparing to Nature Prescribe: Building a Nature Rx

Tools to help you decide if a nature prescription would be a suitable tool to help your patient meet their health goals, and important considerations to make when formulating their prescription according to their unique motivations, strategies, barriers and facilitators to connecting with nature

- Should I Prescribe Nature to My Patient? (checklist, p. 13)
- What Should I Consider When Prescribing Nature? (p. 14-16)

Provider Template & Case Studies

Tools to help you navigate the process of introducing, educating patients on the evidence behind, and co-creating a nature prescription. The case studies apply these tools and processes to mock clinical encounters/scenarios.

- Bring It Up & Background (p. 18)
- Co-Creating a Nature Prescription (p. 19)
- Nature Connection Prescription: A Template (p. 20)
- Patient-Specific Case Studies (p. 22-25)

Planning Tool for Motivators & Barriers

Tools to further tailor collaborative Nature Rx plans to the unique goals, motivators and facilitators of each individual.

- Section 1: Motivation & Strategies (p. 27)
- Section 2: Barriers & Solutions (p. 28-29)

Appendix: Additional Resources to Supplement Tools

- Checklist: How to Prescribe Nature (p. 31)
- Is Nature Rx Right for Me? A Checklist for Adolescents (p. 32)
- Video Series about NatureRx for patients (p. 33)
- Nature Prescribing in the Electronic Medical Record System (p. 34)
- Other Nature Rx Resources and Programs (p. 35)



SHOULD I PRESCRIBE NATURE TO MY PATIENT?

You can use this checklist as a decision-making tool to help you decide whether a nature prescription may be a good fit for your patient.

CHECKLIST (OPTIONAL):

- My patient has safe access to nature (indoors and/or outdoors).
- Spending time in nature could improve my patient's health and wellbeing (e.g., mood, sleep, physical activity, stress, or _____).
- I have considered possible risks (e.g., mobility, allergies, safety, or _____), and my patient can participate safely.
- A nature prescription is appropriate for my patient's needs and supports their care plan.




BUILDING A NATURE RX

It is important that the nature prescriptions are tailored to the patient's needs, preferences, interests, and abilities to ensure equitable participation. The planning tool on **pages 26-27** list several accessibility and safety considerations, along with possible solutions.


The five Nature components are:

The Connection 

Location 

Frequency & Duration 

Social Aspect 

Motivators & Barriers 

The remainder of Section 2 explores each component in turn, including example questions that could help guide the co-creation process.

1

Co-Creating a Connection

Scientific evidence & Indigenous Knowledge emphasizes the importance of connection. Connection with nature can be cultivated through activities that encourage mindful and meaningful engagement with nature. It is important that these activities are tailored, placing the patient's ability and interest(s) at the forefront

Finding out your Patients Interests:

- Do you enjoy walking/ running?
- Do you enjoy drawing?
- Do you enjoy meditating/ journaling?
- Do you enjoy listening to the sound of water flowing (ie. A river)
- Do you enjoy sitting outside and feeling the ground?
- Do you enjoy listening to the birds chirping?
- Other: _____

Relationship/ Connection Questions:

- Is there a space you feel particularly connected to?
 - Is there a plant or animal you feel particularly connected to?
 - Is there a nature sound you feel particularly connected to?
 - How can you reflect on these connections? (Ie. Journaling, meditation, etc.).
- Consider including this in the prescription, as *connecting* with nature is an important component to nature exposure.

2

Location

This refers to where your patient will engage in the nature prescription, which must be tailored to meet the needs and abilities of your patient. A nature prescription can occur at a park or simply involve your patient connecting with their favourite tree. A nature prescription can always occur indoors, and some families and patients might be able to engage in an outdoor nature prescription as well.

Inside and/or Outside Questions:

- Do you have access to safe outdoor greenspace? (Consider neighbourhood factors, etc.)
- Do you enjoy going outside?
- Do you feel particularly connected to a piece of nature? (I.e. A plant, specific nature sounds, a place/location?)
- Do you enjoy going outside, or being indoors?
- Does your health condition hinder, or facilitate, your participation in an outdoor nature prescription?

3

Quantifying the Connection

Frequency: Daily, weekly, other

Duration per [day, week, other]: i.e., 30 minutes per day

4

Considering Social Connection

Who Should the Prescription Include?

You can also include a social connection in your nature prescription (optional). Nature Rx can be carried out individually or with someone/something else. For some people, social connection may provide additional benefit, and increase uptake and adherence.

Social Component Questions

- Would you benefit from social connection during their nature prescription? For example, do you want to be with a friend? Family?
- Do you prefer being alone? With someone?
- Does your patient have a dog/pet?

5

Considering Motivation and Barriers

Research has suggested that for nature prescriptions to be effective, equitable, and sustainable, they should address motivations and barriers (Astell-Burt et al., 2023). When co-designing nature prescriptions, it is important to consider both individuals' varying abilities to engage with natural environments and the external barriers that may limit access, as well as how these factors interact with different levels of intrinsic motivation for nature contact.

The table below suggests strategies for supporting effective and equitable Nature Rx based on patient barriers and autonomous motivation.

		Autonomous Motivation for Nature Contact	
		High	Low
Barriers to Nature Contact	Low	Low priority: already regularly visiting nature or might do so with minimal encouragement or education	Personal focus: requires interventions to strengthen autonomous motivation for nature contact while ensuring no barriers emerge
	High	Contextual focus: requires interventions to reduce barriers while maintaining high levels of autonomous motivation	Multilevel focus: requires multifaceted interventions to increase autonomous motivation and reduce barriers to nature contact

Source/citation: Astell-Burt T, Pritchard T, Francois M, Ivers R, Olcoñ K, Davidson PM, et al. Nature prescriptions should address motivations and barriers to be effective, equitable, and sustainable. *Lancet Planet Health*. 2023;7(7):e542–e543. Figure 1.

*Please see **pages 25- 28** for a planning tool on how to navigate different patient motivators and barriers*

SECTION 3
PROVIDER
TEMPLATE &
SAMPLE SCRIPT



Template & Sample Provider Script

In this section we provide a template to guide Nature Rx conversations & co-design consultation with patients. Below, we break up the Nature Rx process into steps, and provide a script that could be optionally applied in the consultation.

Step One: Bring it Up

Nature prescriptions are increasing in popularity in health/social care as a form of social prescribing, with a goal to improve the physical and mental health and well-being of patients. Nature prescriptions can involve both indoor and outdoor nature connection and are flexible to fit your needs and preferences. I believe engaging with nature may help you because [describe why nature will lead to the patient's [target outcome]].

- What do you think about that?
- How does that make you feel?
- Where is a place you feel the most calm/relaxed/at peace/safe?

Step Two: Provide Background

What Nature Prescriptions Are:

Nature prescriptions are written prescriptions for spending more time in, and connecting with, nature that are made collaboratively between a healthcare provider and a patient. The goal of nature prescribing is to encourage us to be more intentional when we spend time in and connect with nature to benefit our overall health.

Evidence for Nature Connections and Prescriptions

For young people, the benefits of connecting with nature may include, but are not limited to, reduced depression, stress, emotional symptom scores, and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder symptomatology alongside improved self-esteem, positive affect, and self-worth. There is evidence for adults as well, such as reduced risk of developing heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes, stress, and boosts memory.

Are you interested in receiving a nature prescription?



Step Three: Co-Creating a Nature Prescription

Let's brainstorm what a nature prescription may look like for you.

1. Goal Setting

A) What outcome(s) are you and the patient targeting?

- Physical health (I.e., Feeling energized, pain management, cardiovascular health)?
- Connectedness (I.e., Social, spiritual, emotional, cultural connectedness)?
- Mental health (I.e., Stress management, symptoms of depression, symptoms of anxiety)?
- Wellbeing (I.e., emotional wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, physical wellbeing [healthy habits])?

Goals: _____

2. Location & Connection - Where will the patient engage in the nature prescription? Below are examples of potential activities.

Outdoor:

- Sit outside and listen to the sounds of a nearby stream/ river.
- Sit outside and feel the ground beneath you.
- Listen to an online nature playlist while looking out of your window.
- Use nature mindfulness cards to guide you with engaging your five senses in nature.
- Nature hunts (scavenge for various nature items) [Children]*
- Bird watching, cloud watching [Adolescents]*
- Walking, hiking, running, bike riding [Adolescents]*
- Unstructured play outdoors (can involve a sport, etc.)
- Rock and pebble painting; chalk
- Other _____

Indoor:

- Listening to nature sounds
- Indoor plant care and/or gardening
- Look at pictures of plants and/or animals (I.e., Nature photography)
- Find one nature item outside and draw it
- Open a window and listen/observe the nature/animals/elements (I.e., Nature journaling)
- Other _____

Location: _____

Connection:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. Duration

- Frequency: Daily, weekly, other
- Duration per [day, week, other]: I.e. 30 minutes per day

Frequency: _____

Duration: _____

4. Who- Is this nature prescription individual, or is there a social component?

Examples:

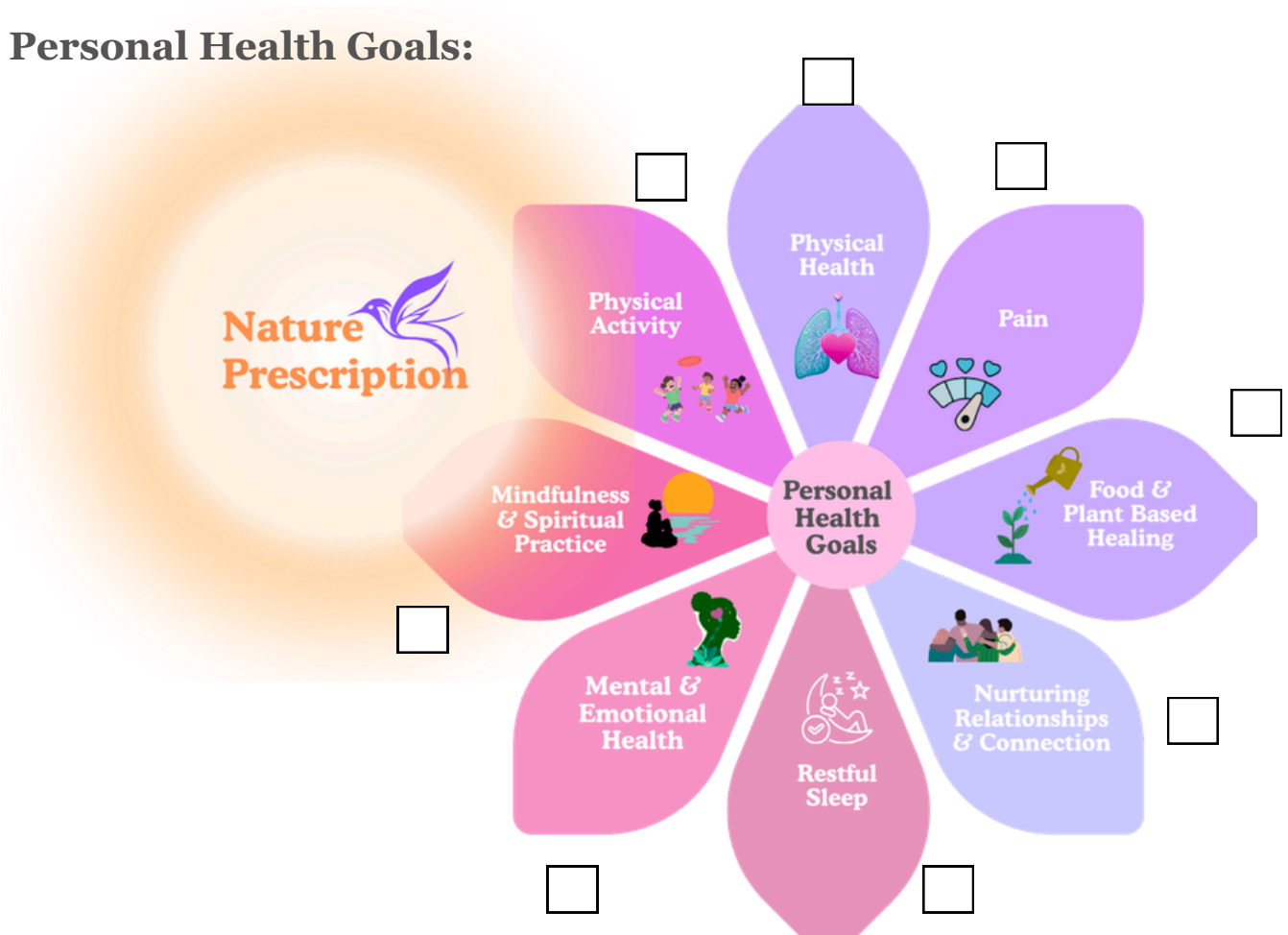
- Bring a friend/ family member
- Bring your pet
- Have some personal (alone) time

Who: _____

Page 20 has a prescription template that could be used in lieu (or to supplement) this page

Nature Connection Prescription

Personal Health Goals:



Activity

Location

Duration

Frequency

Who with

Follow-Up



SECTION 3

CASE STUDIES FOR PROVIDERS

Case Study 1

You are about to have a consultation with Julia, a 17-year-old high school student who has been diagnosed with **depression** by her pediatrician, and is experiencing symptoms such as persistent sadness, lack of energy and difficulty concentrating in school. Julia has developed a recent history of **substance misuse**, including binge drinking on the weekends and almost daily cannabis use as coping mechanisms to deal with her **body image concerns**. Julia is living with **obesity**, has **high blood pressure**, and lives in downtown London, Ontario, near Victoria Park. Julia has no access to a vehicle and is an only child. After assessing the potential risks and accessibility considerations before the consultation (details available in the Nature Rx Template), you decide to bring up a conversation on nature prescribing.

During the consultation, you bring up the benefits of engaging in a nature prescription to support Julia's health, such as improved mood, decreased symptoms of depression, and increased physical activity. Julia agrees with the nature prescription and shares with you that they are willing to try spending time at a local park in London, and is comfortable using public transportation. A lot of Julia's friends live in their neighbourhood, so Julia will go to another park to avoid being seen by their peers.

Below is an example of a nature prescription you can co-create with your patient using the Nature Rx Script:

1. Goal Setting

A) What outcome(s) are you and the patient targeting?

- Physical Health
 - Healthy weight ✓
 - Pain management
 - Cardiovascular health
- Mental Health
 - Distress management
 - Symptoms of depression ✓
 - Symptoms of anxiety
 - Symptoms of trauma/ PTSD
- Connectedness
 - Social connectedness
 - Spiritual connectedness
 - Emotional connectedness
 - Cultural connectedness
- Wellbeing
 - Mindfulness ✓
 - Self-esteem
 - Sense of purpose
 - Physical wellbeing (healthy habits, sleep, etc)

Key details:

- Depression
- Substance use
- Living with obesity (& body image concerns)
- Downtown
- High blood pressure

Goals: We are targeting feelings of depression and weight management using our five senses in nature

Prescription (How to Achieve Those Goals):

2. Connection and Activity:

Outdoor: Walking in Victoria Park, using your five senses (at least three times/week, 20 minutes)

Indoor: Sit at home with your window open, and engage in meditation while reflecting on your five senses (at least twice daily, 10 minutes)

3. **Who-** Is this nature prescription individual, or is there a social component?

Examples:

- Bring a friend/family
- Bring your dog
- Have some personal (alone) time

Who: Individual

Case Study 2

You are about to meet with Leila, a 13-year-old, and her other, who recently immigrated as a refugee to London, Ontario, from Syria due to the Civil War in Syria. Leila has been experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and intrusive memories of trauma, including nightmares and frequent worries about both her family's future and safety.

She has a strong bond with her family, especially her mother, who has also expressed concerns about Leila's wellbeing at school, because of social isolation due to language barriers. Leila's parents are hesitant to venture far from their apartment due to publicized instances of Islamophobia in the city. Leila has shared that she feels nervous when she is not with her family and community. Based on Leila's input and health concerns, you decide to initiate a conversation about nature prescribing during your consultation.

You tell Leila and her mother how time in nearby natural spaces can support post-traumatic stress disorder, and there is nature connections Leila and her family can do close to their home and community. They agree with the nature prescription. Leila's mother tells you that their family lives in White Oaks neighbourhood. However, the park gets busy on the weekends, and there are other local parks within walking distance of their neighbourhood.

1. Goal Setting

A) What outcome(s) are you and the patient targeting?

- Physical Health
 - Healthy weight
 - Pain management
 - Cardiovascular health
- Mental Health
 - Distress management
 - Symptoms of depression
 - Symptoms of anxiety
 - Symptoms of trauma/ PTSD ✓
- Connectedness
 - Social connectedness ✓
 - Spiritual connectedness
 - Emotional connectedness
 - Cultural connectedness
 - Nature connectedness ✓
- Wellbeing
 - Mindfulness ✓
 - Self-esteem ✓
 - Sense of purpose ✓
 - Physical wellbeing (healthy habits, sleep, etc) ✓

Key details:

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Newcomer- new to London, Ontario
- Youth and family together
- Islamophobia

Goals: We are targeting nature and social connection by spending time in nature

Prescription (How to Achieve Those Goals):

2. Connection and Activity:

Outdoor: Nature scavenger hunt in backyard, or going to White Oaks Park (or nearby park) (at least three times/week, 30 minutes)

Indoor: Sit at home with your window open [or on balcony], and draw five things you see, four things you hear, three things you smell (at least once daily, 20 minutes)

3. Who- Is this nature prescription individual, or is there a social component?

Examples:

- Bring a friend/family ✓
- Bring your dog
- Have some personal (alone) time

Who: Time spent in nature with family and friends

Case Study 3

You are preparing to meet with Eli, a 15-year-old **inpatient of Indigenous identity**. Eli has a deep and long-standing connection to nature, having grown up spending weekends at his grandparents' cabin surrounded by the land. He was brought up with traditional teachings and ceremonies, such as sweat lodges and sun dances.

Recently, Eli was diagnosed with **Crohn's disease** and identified with **early atherosclerosis**, placing him at increased risk for future cardiovascular complications. He also requires a CPAP at night for **sleep apnea**. Eli often feels out of breath while walking and relies on a **wheelchair** most days.

During your consultation, you explain how nature can serve as a grounding practice, and share information about the Garden Groups through the Youth Indigenous Wellness Program at the Children's Hospital. Led by an Indigenous Social Worker, the Indigenous Healing Garden is described as a place of healing, reflection, and connection to the land—a meaningful space for Eli to honour the strength, culture, and traditional medicines of Indigenous Peoples.

You also discuss ways Eli can bring nature into his daily life on lower-energy days, such as listening to nature soundscapes, keeping plants in his room, or watching recorded videos of his favourite outdoor settings.

1. Goal Setting

A) What outcome(s) are you and the patient targeting?

- Physical Health
 - Healthy weight
 - Pain management
 - Cardiovascular health ✓
- Mental Health
 - Distress management
 - Symptoms of depression
 - Symptoms of anxiety
 - Symptoms of trauma/ PTSD
- Connectedness
 - Social connectedness
 - Spiritual connectedness
 - Emotional connectedness
 - Cultural connectedness
 - Nature connectedness ✓
- Wellbeing
 - Mindfulness ✓
 - Self-esteem ✓
 - Sense of purpose ✓
 - Physical wellbeing (healthy habits, sleep, etc) ✓

- Key details:
- Cardiology (complex care)
 - Crohn's Disease
 - Sleep Apnea
 - Inpatient
 - Mobility challenges
 - Pre-existing connectedness to nature
 - Indigenous Identity

Goals: We are targeting emotional and psychological well-being and nature-connectedness

Prescription (How to Achieve Those Goals):

2. Connection and Activity:

Outdoor: Indigenous Wellness Garden group (at least two times/week, 45 minutes) and collect sensory items outside to bring indoors

Indoor: Care for a plant and nature drawing near a window (at least once daily, 20 minutes)

3. Who- Is this nature prescription individual, or is there a social component?

Examples:

- Bring a friend/family ✓
- Bring your dog
- Have some personal (alone) time

Who: Group and individual

Case Study 4

You are having a consultation with Abby, a 14-year-old patient. Abby is in remission from **anorexia nervosa** and has been diagnosed with **extreme social anxiety**, which often shows up as social withdrawal, difficulty being in public spaces and sleeping. Abby identifies within the **2SLGBTQ+ community as Queer** and has been having challenges with peer relationships at school. Abby also shares that they feel overwhelmed about the environment and talks about seeing “devastating” videos on social media about climate disasters. One of Abby’s main sources of stability and comfort is their older sister, who is 18.

You have already mentioned nature prescribing in the winter to Abby when they were in recovery and highlighted how nature exposure can support reduced anxiety, help manage eco-distress (emotional distress from climate and environmental change), and provide a form of gentle activity.

You are now following up with Abby, who shares with you that they have been following their nature prescription. Their nature prescription was painting and drawing near an open window four times a week, for 15-30 minutes. Abby also potted a plant and has been taking care of it indoors, which provided them a sense of environmental stewardship. You explain to Abby that, since it is not cold outside anymore and Abby is now in remission, you can add some outdoor nature elements for light exercise.

1. Goal Setting

A) What outcome(s) are you and the patient targeting?

- Physical Health
 - Healthy weight
 - Pain management
 - Cardiovascular health
- Mental Health
 - Distress management
 - Symptoms of depression
 - Symptoms of anxiety ✓
 - Symptoms of trauma/ PTSD
- Connectedness
 - Social connectedness
 - Spiritual connectedness
 - Emotional connectedness
 - Cultural connectedness
 - Nature connectedness ✓
- Wellbeing
 - Mindfulness ✓
 - Self-esteem
 - Sense of purpose
 - Physical wellbeing (healthy habits, sleep, etc)

Key details:

- Anxiety
- Eating Disorder- Anorexia
- Eco-distress- feeling overwhelmed about climate change and environmental harm
- 2SLGBTQ+

Goals: We are targeting nature connectedness, mindfulness, and feelings of anxiety by engaging in nature

Prescription (How to Achieve Those Goals):

2. Connection and Activity:

Outdoor: Slow walking in local park (5 minutes, three times a week)

Indoor: Nature journaling about your experiences at the park, and take care of a plant (at least 20 minutes, daily).

3. Who- Is this nature prescription individual, or is there a social component?

Examples:

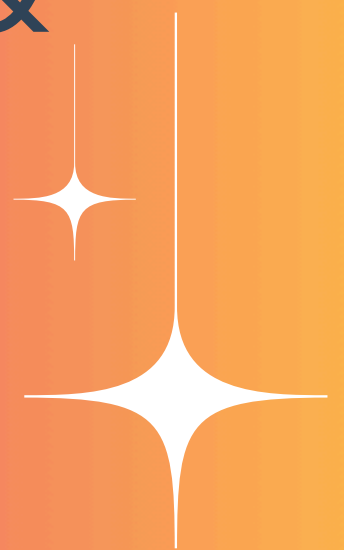
- Bring a friend/family ✓
- Bring your dog
- Have some personal (alone) time

Who: Individual and with sister



SECTION 4

PLANNING TOOL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL MOTIVATORS & BARRIERS



Section 1: Motivations and Strategies

Motivation level	Description	Tailored Strategies	What motivation level are you? Which strategies do you think could work for you?
Low Motivation	Not ready, unsure of benefits	<p>Start very small (whenever possible), connect to routine, enjoyable low-effort activities</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you walk home from school, do an extra lap around your block every day • If you watch YouTube before you sleep, also watch a 2-minute nature video 	
Medium Motivation	Interested but inconsistent	<p>Find ways to do it through things you already like or are already doing! Start with small steps, and introduce gradual increase (daily, weekly, monthly, between consultations, etc.)</p> <p>Flexible scheduling and introduce potential reminder systems (i.e., Calendar reminders).</p>	
High Motivation	Ready and committed	<p>You may benefit from a nature prescription with high frequency and duration, with multiple connections that you try. Here, you will also try to expand and build upon existing nature interests and activities you already do!</p> <p>You can try to track your progress and introduce connecting to nature to your family and friends!</p>	

Section 2: Barriers and Solutions

Barrier	Example / Impact	Possible Solutions	What barriers might you experience? How do you think you can overcome them?
Weather	Hot, cold, rainy, snowy, poor air quality, or not enjoying the weather that day	<p>Make sure you're being safe and check for weather updates online. You can always connect with nature indoors!</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it is [too hot, too cold, poor air quality] outside, stay indoors and watch nature videos online or draw what you see outside • If it is raining, make sure you dress for the weather (raincoat), or sit indoors with your window open and listen to the rainfall 	
Nature and Green-Space Accessibility	<p>Limited green space nearby</p> <p>Limited transportation</p> <p>Limited financial resources</p>	<p>Local parks (walking distance), virtual nature, indoor greenery</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit on your balcony (or in your backyard) and feel the ground beneath you while listening to nature sounds (birds chirping, leaves rustling) • Go for a walk outside (you don't need to be at a park to connect with nature, it is all around us!) • Watch nature videos/ nature meditation videos online • Take care of a plant indoors • Sit by your window and journal: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Write down three things you see b. Write down two things you hear c. Write down one thing you smell d. How do you feel? <p>You don't need to go far! Use what is around you. You don't need to get anything extra to connect with nature!</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go on a walk outside • Go outside and collect nature items that you find (pinecones, pebbles, pretty leaves that have fallen, etc) • Open your window. What do you hear? Smell? See? 	

Section 2: Barriers and Solutions

Barrier	Example / Impact	Possible Solutions	What barriers might you experience? How do you think you can overcome them?
Safety	<p>Fear of going alone</p> <p>Unsafe neighbourhood or outdoor spaces (park)</p>	<p>You can bring a friend, family member, or your pet! You also don't need to go far- nature connection can be found right where you live!</p> <p>You can engage in your nature connection wherever you feel most comfortable. This can include being indoors sitting near an open window, or taking care of a plant!</p>	
	<p>Reluctant to be seen/ near others (e.g., peers)</p> <p>Fear of victimization due to identity</p>	<p>Your nature connection also doesn't need to happen at the same time every day. Feel free to go to a park during the week but stay indoors on the weekend!</p> <p>Connecting with nature is an experience that is unique to you- you can choose a time and location that feels the safest.</p>	
	<p>Physical ability</p>	<p>Your nature connection is meant to suit your needs. If physical activity is not an option/ preference for you, you can engage in many indoor and outdoor connections that involve sitting, looking, and reflecting on the nature around you- you don't need to move!</p>	
Time	<p>Busy schedule, competing priorities</p>	<p>You can adapt your nature connection to fit your schedule and needs. Perhaps you have more available time on Wednesdays, so you decide to nature journal outside for 1 hour. During the rest of the week, you simply take 10 minutes watching a nature meditation video indoors.</p>	



APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



HOW TO PRESCRIBE NATURE TO MY PATIENT A CHECKLIST

Patient Considerations

- My patient has safe access to nature (indoors and/or outdoors).
- Spending time in nature could improve my patient's health and wellbeing (e.g., mood, sleep, physical activity, stress, or _____).
- I have considered possible risks (e.g., mobility, allergies, safety, or _____), and my patient can participate safely.
- A nature prescription is appropriate for my patient's needs and supports their care plan.

Prescription Aspects

- I have had a conversation with my patient about the goals and outcomes they want from connecting with nature.
- My patient and I have determined indoor and/or outdoor (as applicable) nature connections that interest them and are deemed feasible (by myself and the patient).
- My patient and I have discussed and agreed upon a desired duration for their nature connection.
- My patient and I have discussed and agreed upon a desired frequency (number of times per week/ day/ month) for their nature connection.
- My patient and I have discussed a follow-up plan, where we will evaluate how the nature connection has been going and whether adjustments need to be made.

Administrative Aspects

- I have completed this prescription for my patient in Power Chart.
- I have printed the prescription and gave it to my patient / their family.
- I have discussed a feasible follow-up opportunity with my patient / their family.



IS NATURE RX RIGHT FOR ME? A CHECKLIST FOR ADOLESCENTS

Checklist:

- I have access to nature, either outdoors (parks, trails, backyard, balcony) or indoors (plants, windows, nature sounds).
- Spending time in nature could help me feel better (improve mood, reduce distress, increase energy, support sleep, or _____).
- I can participate safely (I've thought about my health, mobility, and allergies, or _____).
- Adding nature to my routine feels like a good fit for me [and] my family.

Why Nature Matters for You

- Improve concentration¹
- Boost positive emotions¹
- Improve focus and attention²
- Reduce symptoms of depression³
- Lower stress and distress⁴
- Help manage ADHD symptoms⁵



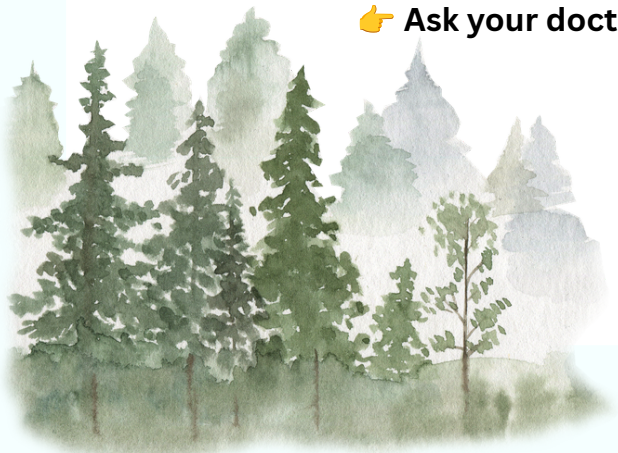
What is Nature Prescribing?

Nature prescribing is when your doctor, nurse, or healthcare provider recommends spending time in nature as part of your care plan.

It might mean going for a walk in a park, sitting by a tree, caring for a plant at home, or even listening to nature sounds.

Research shows that nature can help improve mood, reduce stress, increase focus, and support overall health.

Ask your doctor about a nature prescription today!



Patient Videos: All About Nature Rx

Share these videos with your patients to help them understand more about nature prescribing!

These videos were created by two Western University students. They were initially designed to help adolescents & youth invited to take part in a feasibility study that serves to evaluate in Nature Rx can to support children & youth to improve their mental health and well-being.

All are invited to view, as they can be helpful for any youth or adult interested in learning more about nature prescriptions!

What are the health benefits of connecting with nature?

Creator: Casey Kauenhofen

<https://tinyurl.com/24d5eesj>



What is a nature prescriptions?

Creator: Grace Asouth

<https://tinyurl.com/59runzw2>



Do you have a Nature Prescription?

Watch this video to learn about different ways you can start connecting with nature!

Creator: Grace Asouth

<https://tinyurl.com/3cmybapw>



Nature Prescribing in the Electronic Medical Record (EMR)

If you share the EMR with London Health Sciences Center, you can prescribe nature to your in- or out-patients directly from the EMR.

In the orders, search for “Nature Therapy”. Select the PowerPlan and then choose either the In-Patient or Out-Patient options.

For In-Patients you will be able to specify whether this is only an indoor, or an indoor & outdoor prescription, who needs to accompany them, what equipment is needed, and other important details.

For Out-Patients, the Rx will look like any other medication prescription. You can use the free text to add specifics.

For both in- and out-patient prescriptions, we have Nature Connection handouts available on our website to accompany the Rx. Feel free to use our Toolkit templates as well.

If you would like a Nature Connection list that is tailored to your patient population, please let us know. We would love to develop this with you!

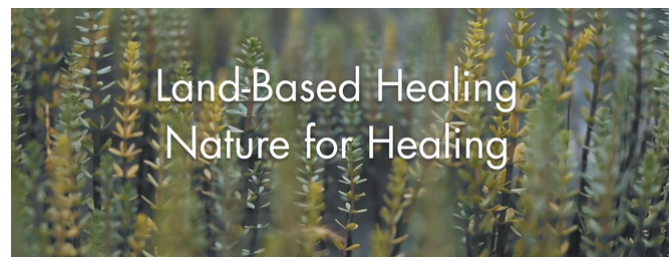
Please keep on eye on our resources page – we continue to add information & videos as we develop more resources!

Want to learn more? Visit natureforhealing.org, and click on “Resources for Providers” in the navigation bar.

Or, simply scan this QR code!



Patient Name: BCDFG, PMDU CARLOS I CLINIC PT (Carlos)	
Birth Date: 2017/NOV/04	Age: 5 Years
Health Card: 9999 999 801 OK	Other ID: Type
Location: V-81P0NC3PP	
Allergies: No Known Medication Allergies	
Pharmacist please note – Allergy list may be incomplete.	
Height:	Weight:
BSA:	
Patient Address: 123 PMDU CRT LONDON, Ontario N6A5W9	Home Phone: (555) 555-5801 Work Phone:
Prescription Details	
Date Issued: 2023/05/19	
1) Nature - Indoor Activity See Instructions Dispense/Supply: Instructions: Look at pictures of plants or animals. Imagine you are with them; what would you say to them?	Refills: 0 LU Code: EAP Approved:



Nature Rx Programs & Resources



Land Based Healing
Nature for Healing



This initiative aims to enhance patient and family healthcare experiences through increased exposure to nature. The team advocates for nature exposure by increasing widespread Nature Prescribing for in- and out-patients, as well as creative spaces & activities to help patients, families, staff, and physicians connect to nature at the hospital. Nature Prescriptions are integrated into the EMR and available to all facilities that share the LHSC EMR. Hundreds of staff & physicians have been trained to prescribe, with more educational tools & awareness campaigns underway.

<https://www.natureforhealing.org/>



Children's Environmental
Health Clinic



Lead by Dr Anna Gunz, the clinic sees patients who wonder if there is a possible link between their health and the surrounding environment. This service integrates clinical service with research, advocacy and educational.

www.lhsc.on.ca/chehc

<https://c2ehc.ca/childrens-environmental-health-clinic-chehc>

Nature Connection
Handouts



The following 2-pager document, located on the Land-Based Healing | Nature for Healing program's website. Each handout highlights different ways to connect with nature when you are indoors or outdoors.

PaRx: A Prescription for
Nature



PaRx is Canada's national, evidence-based nature prescription program.

<https://www.parkprescriptions.ca/en-ca>

Park Rx America (PRA)



PRA is committed to educating healthcare professionals and the public, and to providing the tools to meet each individual's unique needs

<https://parkrxamerica.org/>

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