

For Immediate Release:

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Public Health Report Calls for a Parks Prescription Many Communities Hardest Hit by Chronic Disease Lack Park Space

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) announces the importance of parks and its improved public health benefits in a new report, *Parks and Public Health in Los Angeles County: A Cities and Communities Report*. Parks help create safer communities, reduce the toll of violence, and provide a venue for outreach to help link community members to health and social services and nutrition assistance programs. The report also details how people in cities and communities with less park space may have shorter lifespans.

Overall, Los Angeles County is relatively ‘park poor’ compared with many other urban jurisdictions in the United States. This may result in higher rates of cardiovascular disease (heart disease and stroke) and diabetes, higher prevalence of childhood obesity, and greater economic hardship compared with cities and communities with more park space.

"From a public health perspective, access to parks and green space is a prescription for families to have opportunities to be outdoors, get active, and engage with their fellow community members," said Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, MD, MPH, Interim Health Officer for Los Angeles County. "We know that getting regular physical activity has profound health benefits, particularly in preventing heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and even some types of cancer."

The study also found that African Americans and Latinos are more likely than Asians and Whites to live in cities and communities with less park space across LA County. The findings suggest more resources for park expansion could help reduce large disparities in health that exist in communities with less park space.

"Every Los Angeles County resident, regardless of their zip code, should be able to realize the many potential health benefits afforded by living near a park and having access to public recreational programs," said Dr. Paul Simon, MD, MPH, Chief Science Officer for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

The full report is available [here](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/chronic/): <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/chronic/>.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$900 million. To learn more about the LA County Department of Public Health and the work they do, visit PublicHealth.LACounty.gov, and follow Public Health on social media at twitter.com/LAPublicHealth, facebook.com/LAPublicHealth, and youtube.com/LAPublicHealth.

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*Los Angeles County Department of Public Health works to protect health,
prevent disease, and promote health and well-being.*

Thank you,
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Los Angeles County Department of Public Health