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The effect of spending time outdoors in daylight on the psychosocial well-being of older people and their family carers

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Abstract

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A8 - The effect of spending time outdoors in daylight on the psychosocial well-being of older people and their family carers

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Spending time outdoors in daylight may provide substantial benefits for the psychosocial well-being of older people. Good psychosocial well-being is essential in maintaining overall health as people age and often reflects adequate physical functioning.

A systematic review of the effects of spending time outdoors in daylight on the psychosocial well-being of older people and their family carers was conducted. Studies that included all older people aged 55 or more, including those living in a community or residential accommodation setting and family carers were considered. All experimental and epidemiological study designs were included. The search aimed to find published and unpublished studies through electronic databases, reference lists, key reports and the World Wide Web. An extensive search up to December 2013 was undertaken. Appraisal of studies was conducted as per the Joanna Briggs Institute guidelines.

A total of 13 studies were included in the final review. In the four studies that evaluated the effects of exposure to daylight on behavioural disturbances, there was no evidence of effect of daylight hours on physical and verbal aggression. There is some evidence to indicate that exposure to daylight for a period of time results in fewer depressive symptoms. Increasing the frequency of going outdoors was associated with better cognitive preservation over a one-year period. Similarly, exposure to daylight resulted in improved social functioning and improved quality of life. There were no studies that evaluated the effect of spending time outdoors in daylight on the psychosocial well-being of family carers, including carer satisfaction or carer stress.

There is insufficient high-quality evidence for the effect of spending time outdoors in daylight on the psychosocial well-being of older people and their family carers. More robust research is required to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to improve time spent outdoors in daylight for older people and their family carers.