

## **PARK RX AMERICA**

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### **Landmark Randomized Controlled Trial Shows Park Prescriptions Boost Physical Activity in Youth—A Scalable, No-Cost Tool for Clinicians Nationwide**

A newly published **randomized controlled trial (RCT)**—the first to rigorously test the impact of Park prescriptions on children’s health—shows that a simple, three-minute conversation between a clinician and a child can meaningfully increase **moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA)** among youth. ***The Park RX RCT: Impact on Physical Activity Among Youth*** offer pediatric, public health, and environmental advocates rare evidence-based research that sits at the intersection of **clinical care, health equity, and nature access.**

Conducted from 2020 to 2024 in a federally qualified health center in Washington, DC, the study followed **514 youth ages 6-16**, most of whom were Latinx or African American and managing chronic health conditions. Providers issued park prescriptions approximately every three months using Park Rx America’s virtual platform, which includes more than 160,000 parks nationwide.

### **Compelling Results in the areas of Pediatric, Public Health and Environmental Stewardship**

Accelerometer-verified data show that children receiving park prescriptions experienced:

- **A 12% increase in MVPA** at 3 and 6 months
- **14 additional minutes of MVPA per week**
- **One extra park visit every two weeks**
- **30 more minutes spent in parks per visit** at 12 months
- **12,557 logged park visits** over the study period
- **97.3% prescription uptake** among intervention participants

These gains were strongest among boys and youth ages 11-16—groups at heightened risk for declining activity levels.

## **A Clinically Relevant, No-Cost Intervention**

For Pediatricians, the study offers a rare example of a **non-pharmacologic, evidence-based intervention** that clinicians can adopt immediately. For public health professionals, it highlights a **scalable strategy** requiring no new infrastructure. For environmentalists and the public, it underscores the role of **nearby nature** as a public health asset.

Dr. Robert Zarr, founder of Park Rx America and co-author of the study, emphasized the significance of the findings:

“Science has finally caught up with common sense. This randomized controlled trial gives healthcare providers the evidence they need to confidently prescribe parks to improve their patients’ health.”

He added:

“It’s rare to find an intervention that is cost-effective, evidence-based, and easy to use. Park prescriptions offer a practical way to combat chronic disease and help kids move more outside.”

## **Why This Matters Now**

Only **20-28% of U.S. youth** meet the federal recommendation of 60 minutes of MVPA per day. Meanwhile, childhood obesity has **doubled**, and adolescent obesity has **tripled** over the past 30 years. The study’s findings demonstrate that a simple, low-burden clinical tool can help reverse these trends—especially in communities disproportionately affected by chronic disease.

## **A Scalable Model for Health Systems**

Park prescriptions require:

- No new programming
- No additional staffing
- No specialized equipment
- Only the existence of parks

Clinicians can learn the process through a **2½-minute instructional video**, and families can also create self-prescriptions to bring to their providers. To access a copy click here: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41101405/>.

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### **About Park Rx America**

Park Rx America is a national nonprofit dedicated to reducing the burden of chronic disease by prescribing nature. Its platform enables clinicians to integrate nature prescriptions into routine care through shared decision-making and easy-to-use digital tools.