

## Appreciate the Australian Air Quality

The Australian way is about being outdoors in the fresh, clean air – clean air that we tend to take for granted. Many countries, especially Asian and European countries, are choked with smog and pollution that is so bad they need to wear face masks when they go outside. We are truly blessed with our air quality, and it promotes good health and happiness.

### Get Outside!

As mentioned previously, Australia is fortunate to have a good, clean air quality that many countries lack. So we owe it ourselves and to each other to get out there and enjoy it.

### **In Australia being out in the open air is good for us in so many ways:**

- (a) **It is good for our health** – because clean air is necessary for us to breathe. Polluted air is harmful for our lungs and other internal organs, and it is also bad for our skin. Our skin needs air to stimulate fresh cell growth and help our pores to breathe, and the sunlight on our skin allows our bodies to manufacture sources of Vitamin D which is essential for cell renewal and strong bones and teeth. It is now believed that the benefits of being outdoors are numerous in the medical world, because it has been found that such ailments as high blood pressure and low immunity are improved. As people, we are living things and are part of the natural environment, so exposure to artificial environments for extended periods of time can be harmful.
- (b) **It is good for our brain** – we all find that if we stay indoors for too long we tend to go a little "stir crazy," especially children. Because people are animals, we actually crave getting in touch with nature and coming back to our natural environment. We prefer to look at plants and sky rather than concrete and steel. If you think about days you have spent relaxing at home by sitting in front of the TV, you'll realise that you still really wanted to get outside at the end of it, or at least the next day. You're relaxed, but you're still feeling something's missing. But if you spend a day relaxing in the park or even sitting in your own back yard, you find at the end of the day you feel a certain inner peace.

Being outside reduces stress and tension, and this is scientifically proven to improve our brain function. Stress is also known to be particularly harmful to our physical health, something that is becoming more prevalent in recent years, particularly because so many of us work longer hours and spend more of those hours in offices with air conditioning. Fresh air releases the good endorphins we need to make us feel relaxed and happy, and this is essential for mental wellbeing.

- (c) **It is good for our bodies** – the more room we have to move around in the more we want to move around in it. Consider when you sit in front of a TV; you just want to sit. But if you are sitting out at a park with your children, you just seem to *feel* that you want to run

around with them, or throw a ball with them. Yes, you're probably quite content to sit and watch them, but you feel more inclined to get up and move around than you do when you're sitting indoors. This movement is essential for our bodies because it keeps our joints and muscles functioning properly, enabling better health for longer. Moving around outside (particularly fitness workouts) lets our bodies breathe in the clean air we need for our internal organs and skin, it keeps our bodies flexible and prevents them from "seizing up." Moving around indoors is good too, make no mistake, but you don't get the benefits of the clean air for your skin and lungs, and you are likely to have a better and more varied range of movement outdoors.

- (d) **It is good for our social lives** – really, nothing beats a barbecue in the back yard or a picnic in the park with loved ones, does it? Because we are releasing the good endorphins into our bodies, we feel more relaxed, and conversation comes easier when we are relaxed. The more relaxed we are, the easier we are to get along with, the more people want to be with us. It really is a flow-on effect.

Being outdoors gives us more room, and more room means more people can fit! If you have a large backyard or entertainment deck, fill it with friends and family on a nice sunny day, and you have a recipe for everyone's healthy wellbeing!