Health Benefits of Wood Worktops

Are wood worktops good for your health?

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Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.

- Frank Lloyd Wright

In the 21st century we spend 90% of our lives indoors and that is even more true for the last two years - with the changes of the pandemic. We are now living, working, and spending more time than ever in our homes, kitchens, offices, and living rooms.

I am sure you have heard this one before - surround yourself with the right people and they will change your life. This statement is as true for the people, as it is for our environment.

So the question is, how does our current environment affect our lives and well-being (our kitchen/ office/home/school/library) and what role can wood worktops play in it?



Our affinity and connection with nature is genetic and deeply rooted within us. We find nature awfully pleasing and that is a universal truth regardless of culture and age.

Wood has been used as a building material for thousands of years by all cultures around the Globe. We find wood visually pleasing, it elicits feelings of warmth, comfort and relaxation, the way we feel a connection to Wood is outside of Reason.

Whilst the practical benefits of wood are self-evident, the health benefits of wood inspired interiors are only recently being studied and researchers are discovering that wood can contribute to the well-being of building occupants.

REDUCE STRESS

“Stress” is very much THE word of the last 20 years. The changes our lifestyle has undergone in the last 50 years is comparable to the changes we experienced in the last 500 years. The importance of stress and the way it can build up without any notice within our fantastically complex organ - the brain, is undeniably one of the most talked about health problems in modern society. It is at the root of multiple health problems, including anxiety, difficulty focusing and hampered social interactions. And in the long-term it can lead to raised blood pressure.

Small ways to improve your stress level on a daily basis, can make a huge impact on our lives and it seems like having Natural Timber in our environment can help

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According to many authoritative studies, exposure to wood products indoors creates similar health benefits to those created by spending time in nature. Research from U.S., Canada and Austria found that humans automatically relax when they are surrounded from natural world elements.

Moreover, during continual exposure to wood, subjects show lower sympathetic nervous system, which brings down stress levels and enables feelings of being energised and optimistic. The researchers compare those effects against cases with people working in predominantly steel or concrete environments without natural elements. The results of those cases show no feeling of uplift, positivity.



How wood in our homes improve health

Bringing a piece of the forest into your home through wooden furnishings and architectural fixtures can actually contribute to your overall wellbeing.

A recent in-depth report titled ‘Wood — Housing, Health, Humanity’, by the Planet Ark Environmental Foundation demonstrates that constant exposure to wood interiors has significant positive effects that replicate those created by spending time in natural surroundings.

A Canadian study, titled ‘Appearance of Wood Products and Psychological Well-Being’, demonstrated that the colours and texture of wood generate warmth, comfort and relaxation in people.

These three feelings were absent in a room with no wood features. Wooden products and home decoration have also been shown to benefit health even while you are asleep.

Sleeping in wooden beds not only lowers blood pressure, heart rate and anxiety but also improves a person’s emotional state and relaxation level.

Planet Ark’s report also showcased a Japanese study that determined that the presence of wood in an indoor space contribute to the growth of an individual’s interactions with others and a positive self-expression.

Such results make it less surprising to see that an increasing number of architects and interior designers make wood a central locus of the built environment.



Wood is warm, comfortable and inviting

The feelings of natural warmth and comfort that wood evokes in people are particularly essential in lowering blood pressure and heart rate, reducing stress and anxiety, and increasing positive social interactions.



Conclusion

We intuitively respond positively to spaces that enhance feelings of happiness and promote productivity, intimacy and efficiency. As you walk into a room, it's essential to pay attention to how feel as you move about the space. We can always look outside for inspiration and bringing those natural elements into our built environment can have a significant impact on our health and wellbeing. Wood proves time and time again to be one of the healthiest building materials in existence; and has incredible effects on our day-to-day life and long-term happiness. With countless studies supporting this, architects and designers can work together to ensure that our homes are psychophysiological optimised. This approach is already ushering in a new era of design that brings biophilia to the forefront and focuses on making the healthiest possible interior spaces.