**DOCTOR’S ORDERS: TAKE A HIKE**

More and more doctors are telling their patients to visit parks and trails. Parks and trails get people outside, active, and in the fresh air. The research is clear: Physical activity is one of the easiest, effective, safest, and inexpensive ways of improving people's health.

Despite the well-known benefits of outdoor activity, too many Minnesotans don't get enough exercise. Getting more Minnesotans outside and active is critical not just for our health, but also for our pocketbooks. Minnesota's health costs are staggering: Annual health care spending in Minnesota totals nearly $41 billion, consuming nearly half of our public spending, and yet more than a third of Minnesotans still live with chronic diseases.  

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### The trail to better health

Trails encourage healthy lifestyles. Studies show that trails can get inactive people to become active and encourage already active people to increase their activity. For many people, their only exercise happens on trails.  

- **60%** Trail users who say they exercise more often because of trails.
- **47%** Trail users who meet physical activity guidelines entirely by using trails.
- **23%** Trail users who say they didn't exercise until they started using trails.

Outdoor activity is recommended for:

- Improved mental health
- Lower risk of cardiovascular disease
- Lower risk of type 2 diabetes
- Improved weight control
- Reduced risk of some cancers
- Strong bones and muscles
- Increased longevity
- Preventing falls

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5. Graphics created by Freepik.