



## Using aquariums for promoting health and well-being

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Despite anecdotal evidence that people find watching fish in aquariums relaxing, there has been little systematic research. This study monitored people's psychological and physiological reactions to growing biodiversity in a large exhibit undergoing refurbishment. Data are presented for three conditions: no fish, low biodiversity, and medium biodiversity. Participants' heart rate, blood pressure and mood were monitored before they viewed the tank for 10 minutes under one of three biodiversity conditions.

The measures were then repeated and additional evaluation questions asked. Heart rate dropped under all three conditions in relation to biodiversity levels but was significantly moderated by tank: (No Fish: -2.57, Low: -5.40, Medium: -5.88). While patterns for blood pressure were similar the effects were not significant. Self-reported mood was most positive in the Medium condition.

This may be the first study to systematically monitor the benefit of populating an environment with different levels of biodiversity. Even watching an empty tank appears restorative but the presence of fish improves these effects. For all dependent variables the Medium biodiversity tank produced the most restorative effects but the differences from Low biodiversity were not significant. We predict significant improvements during the next phase of restocking (Spring 2012) when biodiversity will increase further.