

The Benefits of Outdoor Play for Children

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Summer is finally here. How will your children be spending their summer days? The summer weather in the Pacific Northwest is usually perfect for outdoor play. Unfortunately, kids in the United States are spending more and more time indoors, often playing computer games or watching television.

Here are some reasons to consider making outdoor play time a priority for your children:

1. **Exercise.** According to the Centers for Disease Control, childhood obesity rates in this country have more than doubled in the last two decades. To prevent this, it is recommended that kids get one or more hours daily of moderate to vigorous physical activity. Outdoors, kids have as much space as they want to run, jump, climb and play sports.
2. **Decrease “screen time.”** This includes time spent watching television and playing on the computer or handheld devices. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than two hours daily of total screen time for children.
3. **Enjoy nature.** We live in a beautiful part of the world, and we want our kids to learn to appreciate and protect our environment. Whether going for walks or just digging in the garden, kids love to explore the outdoors and get dirty.
4. **Mental and emotional health.** Unstructured outdoor play time is a great stress reliever and a good way for kids to burn off their extra energy. Outdoor play and contact with nature have been shown to positively impact conditions such as anxiety and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
5. **Better sleep.** Research has shown that people of all ages who get at least an hour of exercise and exposure to natural light during the day will often sleep better at night.

Have fun with your kids this summer and **GET OUTDOORS!**