

Active Lifestyles

5 Key Reasons To

Play Outside With Children

Going Green:
Simple Steps for
N.C. Families

Child experts have been looking at the importance of green time for children – time for being outside in nature. As it turns out, there are some very important benefits of outdoor activity.

Playing outside is fun for everyone

- ▶ Before we get into the benefits, let's be honest. Playing outdoors with friends and family is just plain fun! There isn't anything else like the joy of a good game of hide-n-seek or flashlight tag. There isn't anything like the wind on your face during a bike ride. Or, the delight of climbing a hill. For young children, those hills seem like mountains.

Playing outside is good for children's bodies

- ▶ Physical health is one of the best reasons to play outside. Kids who do outdoor activities (at least an hour a day) tend to be more fit. They are also at healthier weights. They can make more vitamin D from the right amount of exposure to the sun (15 to 30 minutes without sunscreen). Studies show that most youth currently do not make enough vitamin D for best health.

Playing outside is good for children's behavior

- ▶ Parents and behavior experts agree on this one. Time spent in outdoor activities helps to improve the behavior of children with attention and hyperactivity disorders. This could include sports, walking or free-play at a park. In fact, the chance to run, jump and burn off some extra energy usually improves the indoor behavior of almost any young person.

Playing outside is good for children's brains

- ▶ Research shows that outdoor play also helps children do better in school. Outdoor time, especially in green settings like parks and playgrounds, helps children concentrate and focus better in the classroom. Creative outdoor play is also important. This includes things like building a fort or tree house. These activities help children develop active imaginations and problem-solving skills.

Playing outside is good for family connections

- ▶ Any outdoor activity is a good way for family members of all ages to spend time together. Anything from lively games to quiet bird watching will do. Playing outside can include activities with a direct goal (*Let's see if we can make some really big bubbles today.*). Or, you can explore and discover (*What kind of bugs are living on these flowers?*).