

With warmer weather and the school year coming to an end, you and your children will be spending more time outdoors. This last edition of our Helping Your Child Deal with the Covid-19 Crisis has tips and activities to help your children have fun and stay safe outdoors. **Coming soon:** Our next series of newsletters will include resources that your family can use throughout the summer.

## The Importance of Outdoor Play

Outdoor play provides many benefits for a child's development. Research shows that outdoor play can improve children's health and mental performance. It can also reduce stress, anxiety, and fear, which is especially important now as children continue to deal with the impact of the Covid crisis.

Children should spend at least 60 minutes of their day outside. There are many fun and simple activities for your child to do outside. The opportunities to play and learn outdoors are endless. As you and your family enjoy these long warm days, keep in mind these tips:

**Let your children decide how they play outdoors.** Offer simple materials with which they can explore and create. For example, give them a cardboard box and see if they can turn it into a car, a fort, or even a store.

**Outdoor play should be flexible, not scripted.** Help your children learn flexibility when things do not work out. For example, if it starts to rain, let your children stay outside and jump in puddles or make mud pies.

**Ask open ended questions.** Watch your children play outdoors and ask them questions about what they're doing and why. For example, what do you think about\_\_\_? What happens if\_\_\_? How did you\_\_\_?

**Enjoy the outdoors.** Encourage your children be aware of their surroundings and to use all of their senses to appreciate the outdoors. Tell your children about your own childhood experiences outdoors. Keep it light and fun!



## Outdoor Safety Tips

- Never leave children outdoors alone.
- Teach your children the boundaries of where they may play and may not play.
- Check your outdoor play area routinely and remove harmful things such as sharp branches, tools, lawn equipment, and animal droppings.
- Apply sunscreen and avoid the peak sun hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Wear a hat, sunglasses, and light-colored clothing to keep cool and protect your skin.
- Provide protective equipment such as helmets, wrist pads, knee pads when riding bikes or scooters.

## Outdoor Activities

Outdoor time is a fun time for children to be inquisitive and creative. Try these ideas as you and your children explore the outdoors.

### Scavenger Hunt

Go for a walk & find things that are:

- a certain color or shape
- dry, wet, shiny
- living, nonliving
- able to crawl

### Look, Touch & Lift

- look under rocks & wood
- touch surfaces that are rough, bumpy, smooth
- compare & contrast sand, dirt, and mud
- look closely at leaves & seeds

### Draw What You See

- trees, rocks, sticks
- birdhouse
- flowers & bushes
- mailbox
- clouds
- your shadow

### Obstacle Course

Use these items to build a simple & fun course:

- jump ropes
- boxes
- hoola hoops
- foam pool noodles

### Water Painting

Use paint brushes & washable paint to color the following outdoor spaces:

- driveway
- sidewalk
- patio or porch

### Movie Night

Create a cozy area in your backyard, make some popcorn, and use a laptop computer, tablet, or your phone to watch a movie or a few episodes of your favorite show!

## Helpful Websites

### The Benefits of Outdoor Play

<https://www.parentingscience.com/benefits-of-outdoor-play.html>

### Outdoor Safety Tips

<https://childcare.extension.org/basic-tips-to-keep-children-in-child-care-safe-outdoors/>

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/tips-sun-safety>

<https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/adding-pa/activities-children.html>

### Outdoor Activities

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/explore-great-outdoors>

<https://www.naturespath.com/en-us/blog/7-fun-simple-outdoor-activities-kids/>

