

## 5 Key Reasons to Play Outside with Children

Everyone from pediatricians and psychologists to teachers and legislators have recently focused on the importance of 'green time' for kids, time for being outside in nature. As it turns out, there are some very important benefits of outdoor activity.

### **1. Playing outside is fun for everyone.**

Before we get into the physical, mental, and academic benefits, let's be honest. Playing outdoors with friends and family is just plain, old-fashioned 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 satisfaction of climbing a mountain (or a hill).

### **2. Playing outside is good for children's bodies.**

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

### **3. Playing outside is good for children's behavior.**

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

### **4. Playing outside is good for children's brains.**

Research suggests that the power of outdoor play extends to helping children learn more in academic settings. Outdoor time, especially in green settings like parks and playgrounds, helps concentration and focus in the classroom. Creative outdoor play, such as building a fort or treehouse, also helps kids develop active imaginations and problem-solving skills.

### **5. Playing outside is good for family connections.**

Any outdoor activity - from vigorous games to quiet bird watching - is a good way for multiple generations to spend time making memories together. Playing outside can include goal directed activities (*Let's see if we can make some really big bubbles today.*), as well as simple exploration and discovery (*What kind of bugs are living on these flowers?*).