

Benefits to Taking Children Outside

1. **Physical and emotional well-being**

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 60 minutes of unstructured free play each day as an essential part of children's physical and mental health and social development. Play protects children's emotional development; lack of free time, in combination with a hurried lifestyle, can be a cause of stress and anxiety, and may even contribute to depression for many children. (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2007).

2. **Lower levels of childhood obesity**

Outdoor play increases physical activity and builds active, healthy bodies, so is an important strategy in addressing the obesity epidemic (CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health, 2008).

3. **Reduced levels of ADHD**

Studies conducted by researchers at University of Illinois indicate exposure to natural settings may be "widely effective" in reducing attention deficit symptoms in children (Applied Psychology, 2011).

4. **Improves concentration and school performance**

Offering sufficient outdoor time improves overall health of our children lengthens attention spans, reduces aggressiveness, improves test scores, and ultimately advances learning. There are many mathematical, science and pre-literacy skills that are "learned" outside through play. Nature play builds academic success! (Evergreen State College, 2003; Journal of Interpretation Research, 2004).

5. **Sunlight is a natural source of Vitamin D**

Lack of outdoor time and sunlight lead to deficiencies in Vitamin D in children, setting them up for increased risk of bone problems, heart disease, diabetes, and other health issues (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2009).

6. **Outdoor time improves eyesight**

Researchers in China found that spending 40 more minutes per day outdoors for three years resulted in a reduced rates of myopia, or nearsightedness, in children. (Journal of the American Medical Association / JAMA September 2015).

7. **Children who play outside grow up to be stewards of the environment**

Surveys completed by a group of Pennsylvania 5th graders indicated that the "feeling of connection to nature explained a portion of the effect that time spent outdoors has on environmental stewardship behaviors." (Proceedings of the Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium 2011).

8. **Improves critical thinking skills**

Outdoor play and environmental education increase critical thinking skills and performance on tests. (Ernst and Monroe, 2004).

9. **Nature makes kids nicer**

Increased time in nature enhances social interactions and makes children "nicer" to each other. (Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 2009).

10. **Enhances creative play and decreases aggression**

Children who play outside are more physically active, more creative in their play, less aggressive, and show better concentration (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2007).

**For more research on and resources for reconnecting children with nature,
visit the Children & Nature Network at <http://www.childrenandnature.org/research-library/>**



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