

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, 2022).

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 Early Care and Education, 2025).

3. **Reduced levels of ADHD**

In the general population, exposure to nature has been found to have robust beneficial effects on cognitive performance, including attention. (International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 2024).

4. **Improves concentration and school performance**

Outdoor time, sleep duration and out-of-school learning time were associated with academic performance in a non-linear manner. Promotion of outdoor time may not negatively impact academic performance. (BMC Public Health, 2023).

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 (Michigan State University Extension, 2025).

6. **Outdoor time improves eyesight**

Researchers in India completed a literature review and concluded that there is evidence to suggest that an increase in the time spent outdoors and a decrease in "near work" has a protective effect in reducing nearsightedness in children. (Indian Journal of Ophthalmology, 2022).

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

This study spotlights the significance of nature connectedness in supporting youth [mental health](#) and laying the foundation for environmental stewardship. (Journal of Environmental Psychology, 2025).

8. **Improves critical thinking skills**

A nature-based outdoor area for early childhood learners provides numerous health and developmental benefits. (Int J Environ Res Public Health, 2024).

9. **Nature play encourages cooperative play and collaborative social skills**

Learning activities in school gardens can promote emotional and social competence. (Frontiers in Psychology, 2021).

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

Nature and greenspace exposure can promote stress reduction, enhance creative play, reduce aggressive behavior, and show better concentration (Science of the Total Environment, 2022).

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



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 **KinderNature**
a resource for early childhood educators

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