

4/29 Outdoor Play to Help Development

When I was a kid, my brothers and I spent hours playing outside. Sometimes with friends playing tag and riding our bikes and sometimes alone throwing baskets and doing gymnastics in the grass. All these activities were fun and we had no idea that this physical play was essential to developing our bodies. Today so many kids spend their play time on electronic devices which are mostly sedentary games. They are not developing at the same rate as their more active peers and childhood obesity is on the rise. With so much learning now on-line, it is very important to try to get outside time if you are able. Here is a list of outdoor activities and how they help your child develop.

- Lie down on your driveway and have your family trace your body. Draw in your face, clothes, ect. or make your outline into a superhero. (Develops fine motor skills, shoulder and hand strength)
- Jump rope (Develops shoulder and leg strength and motor planning skills)
- Hopscotch (Develops balance, overall body strength, motor planning, and eye-hand coordination)
- Throw a football or frisbee back and forth (Develops shoulder and hand strength, motor planning skills, and eye-hand coordination)
- Play in the sand or the dirt making sandcastles, building hills and roads for toy cars, trucks, or army figures. (Develops shoulder and hand strength, provides tactile input which can be calming)
- Build rock towers (Develops eye-hand coordination and spatial awareness)
- Plant a garden (Develops shoulder and hand strength)
- Use a swingset if you have one in your yard (Develops inner ear, balance which is calming)
- Blow bubbles (Develops oral motor strength and is calming)
- Wash the car together (Develops trunk and shoulder/hand strength)
- Make paper airplanes to fly (Develops fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination and spatial awareness)

- Have a water gun fight (Develops overall body strength and motor planning skills)
- Paint rocks (Develops fine motor skills)
- Build a fort with lawn furniture and blankets (Develops overall body strength)
- Try to make cartwheels or handstands (Develops overall body strength, particularly the shoulders)
- Walk barefoot in the grass (Provides sensory feedback that can be calming)
- Run through a sprinkler (Develops whole body strength and motor planning skills)
- Lay on a large towel or blanket and try to find figures in the clouds, then close your eyes and see what you hear (Provides sensory input which can be relaxing)

I hope some of these ideas will work with your families. Maybe you have fond memories of playing some of these activities when you were a kid.

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