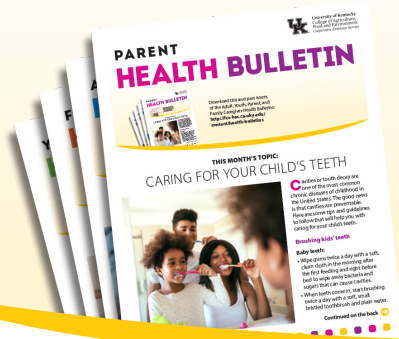


PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



JUNE 2024

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<http://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/content/health-bulletins>

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

STEP INTO NATURE, SUMMER EDITION



School is ending, and many family's schedules are finally slowing down from the seemingly never-ending barrage of concerts, ball games, plays, and awards ceremonies that occur at the close of the school year. As you and your kids begin to find gaps in your schedule and down time during longer summer days, lean into the opportunity to spend time outside together.

The warm weather and extra hours of sunshine during the summer provide time and motivation to enjoy the great outdoors. Being outside is important for kids, for their health and well-being, as well as providing opportunities to be creative, explore, and engage their senses. Kids need to be physically active to grow and develop strong muscles and bones.

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Kids need to be physically active to grow and develop strong muscles and bones. Outdoor space allows kids to run, jump, climb, and swing. Kids need at least one full hour a day of active time, and more is even better!

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Kids have lots of energy, and playing outside is the perfect outlet for using up energy in healthy ways. Also, when kids spend time outside being active, they are then better able to pay attention, stay focused on tasks, and follow directions. Active play outdoors can also help with impulse control and curb disruptive behaviors. Consider how you can build regular time outdoors into your daily and weekly routines as a family, and specifically for your kids.

As you think about outdoor opportunities in your area, whether urban or rural, consider reaching out to your local parks and recreation department. Many communities have walking trails, group hikes, parks, pools, and nature reserves within close proximity. You may be surprised by the offerings available!

Here are some additional ideas of ways to spend time as a family outside this summer:

- **Organize a nature scavenger hunt:** Look for certain kinds of plants, trees, animals, and birds. See how many items children can find on a list, or that match a certain description. There are many templates available online to give you ideas.
- **Start a nature collection:** Is your child particularly interested in a certain item in nature? Encourage them to look for different or unique kinds of rocks, acorns, leaves, or pinecones to collect and display.
- **Have a ball:** Kicking a soccer ball, throwing a frisbee, jumping rope, or playing any sports you all enjoy can keep the outdoors fun as children get older. Invite neighbors or friends to join in and organize a full-fledged game of kickball or volleyball.
- **Pack a picnic or plan a barbeque outside.** Share a meal, take a walk, or play a game together



while you enjoy the outdoors. It does not have to be fancy to be enjoyable. A simple salad or sandwiches, or even leftovers can be more enjoyable when you eat them in a new atmosphere.

While being outside has many benefits, it is important to protect yourself and your kids from too much sun exposure. Remember things like protective clothing and sunscreen, sunglasses, a hat, and insect repellent. It may be helpful to keep a basket with these items by your door, to make it easy to grab before heading outside to play, hike, bike, or swim this summer!

REFERENCE:

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/power-of-play/Pages/playing-outside-why-its-important-for-kids.aspx>

ADULT
HEALTH BULLETIN

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