

Healthy Active Early Years

A Grant from the Coastal Bend Diabetes Initiative

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Outdoor Play

Adapted from Children's Outdoor Environments:
A Guide to Play and Learning By Janet McGinnis

Playing outdoors as a child is something most of us remember fondly and take for granted as being a normal part of growing up. Maybe the memory is of swinging at a park, exploring the woods, playing ball with some friends, turning rocks in a creek, riding on a wagon, or rolling in the grass. Maybe it is playing on a dirt lot or enjoying jump rope along a sidewalk under a brilliant sky. Most of us, whether growing up in a big city or in a rural area, have fond memories of playing outdoors as a child. Children play simply to enjoy the activity. Young children do not differentiate between play, learning, and work - it is all fun.

Active play, problem solving play, explorations of the world, and sensory satisfactions are all found outdoors. The outdoor environment offers a sense of freedom for both children and adults. There is often more space to move around, shout, sing, leap, roll, stretch, fling, throw, run, and release energy, all without the fear of breaking something. The outdoors is somewhere to be loud, quiet, active, observant, creative and risk-taking. It is a place to create memories.

The outdoor environment offers many possibilities for expressing feelings. Children need opportunities for releasing negative feelings in play. Throwing can be a release. Tumbling, running, rolling, and tussling can release energy. So much is orchestrated, organized and scheduled for children every day that the opportunity for freedom that

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Playground Safety Report Card

Adapted from National Program for Playground Safety
www.playgroundsafety.org

How does your local playground rate?

	Yes	No
Children can easily be viewed on equipment		
Children can be viewed in crawl spaces		
Rules are posted regarding expected behavior		
Playgrounds have separate areas for ages 2-5 and 5-12		
Platforms have appropriate guardrails		
Platforms allow change of directions to get on/off structure		
Signage indicating age group for equipment provided		
Equipment design prevents climbing outside the structure		
Supporting structure prevents climbing on it		
Suitable surfacing material provided (loose fill or rubber surfacing)		
Height of all equipment is 8 feet or lower		
Appropriate depth of loose fill provided (recommended 12 inches)		
Six foot use zone around equipment has appropriate surfacing		
Concrete footings are covered		
Surface free of foreign objects		
Equipment is free of noticeable gaps		
Equipment is free of head entrapments		
Equipment is free of broken parts		
Equipment is free of missing parts		
Equipment is free of protruding bolts		
Equipment is free of rust		
Equipment is free of splinters		
Equipment is free of cracks/holes		

TOTAL "YES" Does the play ground make the grade?

23-19=A

18-17=B

15-12=C This play ground is potentially hazardous for children.

11-7=D Children are at risk on this playground.

7 & Under=F Do not allow children on this playground

out door play offers becomes very important. No wonder they love to go outdoors!

Dressed & Ready to Play

Adapted from Children's Outdoor Play Environments
A Guide to Play and Learning

Children need shoes they can run in, clothing that fits them appropriately and protects them in a variety of weather conditions. Some clothing is hazardous to play. Children should not wear clothing with drawstrings or hoods due to risk of entanglement or strangulation. Some shoes, such as cowboy boots, dress shoes, flip flops and other types of sandals can make running and climbing a hazardous activity. Children need warm clothes, cool clothes, raincoats, boots, hats with rims, long sleeves, clothes that can get wet and clothes that can get dirty. There is an old Swedish saying that states, "There is no bad weather, only bad clothes."

Consider these guidelines mentioned in the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale for outdoor play:

TOO COLD?

Temperatures too cold to go outdoors: 20 degrees or less
Temperatures 21-32: Limit time outdoors to 20-30 minutes and go outdoors for short periods of time during the warmest parts of the day.

TOO HOT?

Temperatures too hot to go outside: 100 degrees or more
Temperature 90-99 degrees: Limit time outdoors to 20-30 minutes and go outdoors for short periods of time during the coolest parts of the day- early morning or late afternoon.

Outdoor play is not recommended when it is thundering or lightening. Remember to protect against sun exposure and always provide plenty of drinking water no matter what the weather.

Smart Snacks: Wrap It Up!

Adapted www.allrecipes.com and www.recipegoldmine.com

What's in it for the Kids? That's up to you! The great thing about wraps is that pretty much anything goes--*inside*, that is. Chicken, turkey, veggies, or even peanut butter and jelly--it's all good. *Very* good. And simple! Load 'em up, roll 'em up, and slice 'em up for delicious snacks that are easy for little fingers to get a hold of. And they look good too. Once sliced, fan them out so kids can get a look at the brightly colored veggies and other ingredients inside. Create your own recipe, or if you need inspiration try the **Southwestern Wrap**: 2 Tbsp vinaigrette dressing, ½ tomato-sliced, ½ avocado-sliced, 1-10 inch whole wheat tortilla, 2-3 Tbsp of vegetarian refried beans, 2 slices Monterey Jack Cheese, 1 Tbsp fresh cilantro – roughly chopped. Place dressing, tomatoes and avocado in a small bowl. Toss to coat veggies with dressing, and set aside bowl. Heat tortilla in a microwave for about 10 seconds. Place on flat surface. Spread with beans. Place cheese slices on top of beans, then top with veggies. Sprinkle with cilantro. Fold top edge of tortilla over filling, then fold over one side, then the other. Serve immediately.

The Science of Nature

Adapted from The Outside Play and Learning Book
By Karen Miller

Children are natural scientists. They are on an eager and endless pursuit to find out how the world works. For young children, not yet capable of abstract thinking, science experiences must involve things that they can perceive with their senses. We can work with children in an outdoor environment to sharpen their perceptions – to help them notice things they see, feel, hear and smell. We can expose them to the phenomena of nature, and gradually give them the words to describe what they encounter. Rather than an aversion to nature, which many people seem to develop somewhere along the way in childhood, we can give the children a respect for nature and heighten their curiosity to find out more. Take notice of the potential science in outdoor play activities such as: playing with sand and water, the pendulum motion of a swing, make the wheels of a tricycle turn around. Imagine the learning possibilities.

Find out how to make your backyard or playground a certified wildlife habitat at <http://www.nwf.org>

April

National Turn Off the TV Month	Youth Sports Safety Month
Week of the Young Child	Child Abuse Awareness Month
Keep America Beautiful Month	National Garden Month
1 st April Fools Day	22 nd Earth Day
Last Friday - Arbor Day	30 th International Walk Day

<http://www.theteacherscorner.net/calendars/>

Let's Move! Gross Motor Activity

Shadow Play: On a bright, sunny day, go outdoors for a "shadow hunt." Encourage children to look for shadows made by your school building, playground equipment, bushes, and their own bodies. Talk about how large shadows, such as those from trees, make the cool, shady areas people enjoy on hot days. Or, try to avoid stepping on one another's shadows or letting others shadows "step on" them.

Shadow Race by Shel Silverstein

(1981 *A Light in the Attic*, Harper Collins Publishers, NY NY).

*Every time I've raced my shadow
When the sun was at my back,
It always ran ahead of me,
Always got the best of me
But every time I've raced my shadow
When my face was toward the sun,
I won*