



# Preschooler *focus*

## GO OUTSIDE AND PLAY!

*Young children benefit greatly from outdoor play, no matter what time of year. Outdoor play can influence physical activity levels and healthy growth and development.*

Outdoor play in the early years has the potential to influence your child's physical, social and cognitive development.

Many parents remember a childhood full of outdoor play. The current generation of children seem to spend less time playing outdoors than previous ones. Children and their parents lead more scheduled lives, and this can limit the time available to play outdoors. Safety concerns and competition with television, video games and computers are other things that limit outdoor play.

Outdoor play can contribute to the development of young children. With more space to play, children can

expend more energy while developing gross motor skills such as running, leaping, jumping and ball handling. These skills can form the basis of more complex movements and activities.

Playing outside can promote a child's curiosity and imagination because outdoor spaces are more diverse and less organized than indoor spaces.

Outdoor play provides opportunities for social interaction with the potential to improve emotional well-being.



### Outdoor Play in the Winter

In the winter months, children still have outdoor recess and playtime at school and daycare. Make sure your child is dressed properly with waterproof boots, snowpants, a winter coat, hat, gloves and a scarf, so he or she is prepared for active play when outdoors. It is a great idea to pack an extra set of dry clothes in case anything gets wet while playing outside.

## Did You Know?



In a review that looked at different physical activity interventions, it was found that outdoor play had a larger effect on moderate-to-vigorous physical activity than indoor activity.



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The Child Health & Exercise Medicine Program at McMaster University is working to advance child health through excellence in research.

To learn about our current studies, visit us online at [fhs.mcmaster.ca/chemp](http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/chemp)

### **The Health Outcomes and Physical activity in Preschoolers (HOPP) Study**

at McMaster University asked parents of 3- to 5-yr-olds about participation in outdoor play. Only 28% of parents reported that their child plays outdoors for 2 or more hours on weekdays, while 48% reported this level of outdoor play on weekends. When playing outdoors, 31% of parents reported that their children most often plays on his or her own property, whereas 16% parents reported that play most often happens at a community playground.

### Winter Play Activities

- ★ Family skating or hockey at your local outdoor rink
- ★ Skiing and snowboarding
- ★ Snowshoeing
- ★ Building snowmen and snow forts
- ★ Sledding or tobogganing
- ★ Scavenger/treasure hunts
- ★ Building an obstacle course in the snow

### Benefits of Outdoor Play in the Early Years

- ❖ Increases the amount of energy kids burn because there is more space for full body movement.
- ❖ Imaginations are stimulated as children explore new sights, sounds and textures.
- ❖ Social skills grow as children work with their peers to invent new games and activities.

More time spent outdoors is associated with higher physical activity levels.

Research suggests that each additional daily hour of time spent outdoors is associated with an extra 20-30 minutes of weekly moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Active for Life [www.activeforlife.ca](http://www.activeforlife.ca)

Active Healthy Kids Canada [www.activehealthykids.ca](http://www.activehealthykids.ca)

Best Start Resource Centre [www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org)

Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute [www.cflri.ca](http://www.cflri.ca)

McMaster University Child Health & Exercise Medicine Program [www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/chemp](http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/chemp)

Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology [www.csep.ca/guidelines](http://www.csep.ca/guidelines)

Canadian Sport for Life Physical Literacy [www.physicalliteracy.ca](http://www.physicalliteracy.ca)

Caring for Kids [www.caringforkids.cps.ca](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca)

ParticipACTION [www.participaction.com](http://www.participaction.com)

#### References:

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