Safe kids @ Healthy kids @ Happy kids

Nature-Deficit Disorder

Kids in the U.S. watch more TV than kids any place else in the world. TV, video games and computers have replaced outdoor play. American children have lost contact with nature. This broken bond between kids and nature is called nature-deficit disorder. It is a health threat, and our children are at-risk.

Studies show that kids who spend time outdoors are happier, healthier and smarter. Being outside nourishes the spirit. It reduces stress and anxiety. It combats depression. Studies show that kids with ADHD have fewer symptoms in nature. They focus better and have less behavior problems.

Nature is a "big school room". Kids learn by using their senses. They see, hear, touch, smell and even taste their world. Watching birds build a nest or twigs float down a stream encourages them to think and question. Kids experience wonder and awe as they look up at the stars. They feel a connection to life – something bigger than their home or school.

Outdoor play promotes movement and exercise. With obesity and childhood diabetes on the rise, kids need to be moving, not sitting. Climbing a tree or building a sandcastle increases a child's self-esteem. It promotes a feeling of success.

Being outdoors, in nature, is more than playing on an asphalt playground or in organized sports. Playing freely and roaming through nature stimulates the creative side of the brain. Mud, leaves, trees and water are "the tools" of pretend play.



Help your child connect with nature.

- Take her outside to play everyday.
- Take daily walks together.
- Schedule outdoor family outings.
- Limit TV, video games and computer time to 1 – 2 hours per day.
- Go to the library. Find nature books or story books about nature.
- Plant a garden.
- Experience, observe and talk about the seasons.
- Enroll in nature camps.
- Form play groups. Take turns watching kids outdoors or in a park.

Improve your brain function and mental health. Enjoy time with your child outdoors.

Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John's Children's Hospital



