



## Activate your Family in the Great Outdoors

Spending time outdoors just feels good, doesn't it? Whether you're out enjoying community parks and pathways or adventuring on mountain trails, getting active outdoors is a great way to boost well-being.

New research confirms what many people have long suspected to be true—there's a clear link between spending time outside and our overall sense of well-being. Getting outside gives us a positive mental health boost – some people report feeling less

stressed or anxious, while others feel more energetic and happy. There's also evidence that spending time outdoors improves our levels of physical activity. We tend to take more steps when we're outside, and we're more likely to take part in "heart-healthy" fitness activities - the kind that make us "huff and puff", like running, cycling, cross-country skiing, or skipping rope.

# Healthy Children

October 2020 Parent Newsletter

We all have our reasons for heading outside, but one thing is certain: kids at all ages and stages benefit from time spent in green space.

If you have younger children, you'll likely find that play comes naturally in the outdoors. Young kids will dig in the dirt, balance on logs, and collect pinecones when they get the chance. They'll play creatively and instinctively in all types of green spaces, including built ones like parks, gardens, and trail systems. Play is best left to the experts—the kids themselves! When they're given time and opportunity to play outside in unstructured ways, they'll learn and practice important life skills like problem-solving and understanding another's point of view. Unstructured play is the foundation for lifelong physical activity and can help to foster a love of the outdoors.

Here are some fun ways to spark outdoor unstructured play with your child:

- Build a fort, birdfeeder, or toy boat with natural materials
  - Camp out or picnic in the backyard
  - Go on a "sensory walk"—ask kids about the different things they can see, smell, hear, or touch
  - Look for shapes in the clouds
  - Make games with sidewalk chalk—try hopscotch, 4-square, or design your own ninja warrior course
- Play in the mud or puddle-jump
  - Search for insects or animal tracks
  - Take indoor activities outside—try board games or read books in the open air
  - Try a nature scavenger hunt—collect leaves, pine cones, acorns, and the like

There's no one-size-fits all when it comes to getting active outside! The best advice is often just to do what brings you joy, and be open to trying new activities with your kids, family, friends, and community (remember to keep following public health guidance such as physical distancing).

Get outside and have some family fun! Your body and brain will thank you (and your kids might too...)

The [AHS Parent COVID Guide](#) can help you figure out what to do when your child feels unwell and/or if they've been notified by AHS as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19.