

YOUTH

HEALTH BULLETIN



APRIL 2025

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

READY, SET, PLAY!

The weather is warming up, the sun is shining more, and the days are getting longer. Spring is finally here! It can be hard to enjoy being outside when it is cold or dreary. So, take advantage of nice weather and sunshine to get outside and play!

Did you know that kids need to play outside? Your brain and body need to play and be outdoors to grow and work best. Many of your favorite reasons for liking to play are also why play is so good for you!

When you play, you get to make your own choices and decisions. The games you choose, the toys you pick to play with, and how you use your imagination help your brain get stronger.

Your body needs to move. Playing outside

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lets you decide how to move it. Maybe you like to race with your friends, jump across rocks, or learn how to do a cartwheel. All these are good for your muscles and bones! Our muscles and bones get stronger when we use them, and play lets you use your body in fun ways.

It is also good to play outside. Sunlight gives our bodies vitamin D, and fresh air is good for our lungs and brain. Not to mention, being outside often helps us feel happier and less stressed. If you feel down or sad, try going outside and moving your body. You will likely feel at least a little better.

Here are some ideas of ways to play outside:

- **Go on a nature treasure hunt:** Look around your yard or neighborhood for unusual items. Can you find a very shiny rock? Or what about a flower in a color different from all the others? What about a leaf that is much bigger than the rest? Can you find animal footprints?



Or sticks in the shape of the letters of your name? You might have to pay attention!

- **Create an obstacle course:** Look for items in your yard, garage, or toys that you can use to make an obstacle course. Make a starting point and finish line. Put items in between them that you will have to jump over, crawl under or through, dodge around, or climb. Once you have made your course, have a grown-up or friend time you to see how long it takes you to finish the course. Then, try to beat your own time!
- **Pretend you are on an adventure:** Think about your favorite book or movie and try to re-create it! It is OK if you do not have all the costumes or props. Get creative and think about what you have that you could use instead! If you need more characters, ask your siblings, friends, or neighbors to play, too!

REFERENCE:

Yogman, M., Garner, A., Hutchinson, J., Hirsh-Pasek, K., & Golinkoff, R. M. (2018). The power of play: A pediatric role in enhancing development in young children. *Pediatrics*, 142(3). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2058>

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