

National ECCELC Newsletter



Let's Play Outside!

Outdoor Play in Early Care and Education- Physical Activities for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers

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Whether you live in the north or south, east or west, May is here and it is Spring! The great outdoors calls us to come outside and play.

Lack of play, especially outdoor play, is a contributing factor to the growing sedentary habits of children. This also limits the opportunities to enjoy learning experiences through nature. There are so many tasks to accomplish each day that sometimes we need to remind ourselves how important imaginative, fully bodied, outdoor play is to our developing young children, including infants and toddlers.

All children should participate in two to three active outdoor play occasions daily, weather permitting. Infants birth to 12 months should be taken outside two to three times per day while toddlers and preschoolers can play outdoors for at least 60-90 minutes daily.

Freedom! To encourage our children to move more, let's take the babies out of the infant seats, swings and bouncy chairs that restrict movement. Buggies and strollers are fine for group walks to smell the air and see the sights, but once you're to your destination make sure to remove them from the stroller to enjoy those outdoor activities!

Preschool children can engage in vigorous play that strengthen muscles, hearts and lungs. Outdoor play encourages creativity and imagination and provides opportunities to learn social skills such as sharing, taking turns, leading and resilience.

References:

Thigpen, B.2007. Outdoor Play Combating Sedentary Lifestyle. Zero to Three, Western Kentucky University

Learning in a Baby's World: Using the Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines: A Complete Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers.2010.Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute.

Adams, E.2013.Nature-Based Learning, Taking Infants and Toddlers Outside Rocking and Rolling, Supporting Infants, Toddlers and Their Families. NAEYC Young Children.

Harms, Clifford, &Cryer, 2006. Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale(Revised Edition). New York. Teachers College Press. Mississippi Head Start Collaboration Office.

Benefits of Outdoor Play & Exploration

- Ample time for unrestricted movement;
- Builds energy and supports increased activity;
- Promotes development of skills in all domains: cognitive, language, and social-emotional;
- Builds connection to nature;
- Increases creative imagination;
- Increases social interactions between children;
- Extends curriculum; and
- Grow an understanding of and comfort with outdoor play and learning.

Playing outdoors is a delightful time. Follow children's leads and take advantage of unexpected discoveries. Have fun with your children!

Celebrating May!

National Bike Month- Hop on those bikes or trikes and go for a ride. No bicycles? Lie on your backs, lift your legs and pedal in the air. Can you pedal backwards?

National Physical Activity and Sports Month- Have a sports themed week and introduce different types of sports to the children. Encourage them to try something new to get them moving.

Memorial Day- Monday, May 30th

If your program is open, parade around the building or playground!

Questions? Please contact your State/Local Project Coordinator or one of our Content Specialists:

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Let's Play Every Day in May- Outdoors!

Provide a variety of outdoor play materials for ball, sand, water art and pretend play. Allow the children plenty of time to play on their own, but provide occasional structured teacher-guided activities as children enjoy and learn from imitation and repetition.

Infant Outdoor Activities

- I Spy- look around and talk to the baby about what you see. Watch the baby's eyes and follow their gaze. Encourage the baby to point and reach.
- Listen!- wiggle fingers, toes, hands or head when you hear a sound. For example, "Do you hear the bird? Do you hear children laughing?"
- Touch- Place a smooth rock in the baby's hands or gently wave a feather. Cloth books, simple toys or changing baby's position creates focus, interest and enjoyment.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Parade- lead children in a parade around the playground. Sing familiar songs, recite lines from a favorite book, and play instruments.
- Shadow Tracing- Stand in the sun under a tree or playground equipment to create your own shadow. Move your body around to trace your shape.
- Jungle Animals- Develop motor skills by jumping like a bunny, slithering like a snake, flying like a bird, pounding like a rhino and bend like a giraffe.

References: Supporting Outdoor Play and Exploration for Infants and Toddlers. Early Head Start National Resource Center at Zero to Three in Collaboration with the Office of Head Start.2013. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ta-system/ehsnrc>



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