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Healthy People
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Improving the health of Durham
& NC communities since 1989

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Getting Children Outside While Social Distancing for COVID-19



At the recommendations of Dr. Matthews Brothers, MD, we are sharing this article which was adapted from "Getting Children and Teens Outside While Social Distancing for COVID-19", by Danette Glassy, MD, FAAP & Pooja Tandon, MD, FAAP.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics (Copyright © 2020)

Dr. Matthew Brothers, MD, a pediatric cardiologist at Novant Health Pediatric Cardiology in Charlotte, NC says, "outdoor activity is excellent for infants and toddlers, especially as restrictions related to COVID-19 ease. It is good for their physical and mental health and development. More outdoor time is linked with improved motor development and lower obesity rates." He encourages families to look for healthy ways to play outdoors with children while staying at a safe distance from others?

Exploring the outdoors while social distancing

Nature all around us. Exploring outside with proper social distancing can happen in your yard.

Bringing out children. Even infants and toddlers can play and learn in nature. If you are in public areas like a park, it may be safest to keep them in a carrier or a stroller.

- **Nature sculptures** can be built with twigs, leaves, cones, rocks and more by sticking the collected items into a play dough base. Notice what kind of patterns are created by different items. Or, let your child play in mud with old pots, pans, utensils, and household tools to develop senses and motor skills.
- **Bike or walk with the family** while keeping your distance from others. If you have a child bicycle trailer or stroller, get some exercise while enjoying the outdoors with your baby. Describe what you see along the way to your baby or preschooler. Use a lot of details to help them learn new words.



Dr. Matthew Brothers, MD

- **Take story time outside.** Grab a blanket, some books and find a shady spot to read with your child outdoors. Pick books that talk about nature and help your toddler make connections.
- **Hold a nature scavenger hunt or start a nature collection.** Hunt for plants, trees, animals, and birds. Collect rocks, acorns, leaves or pinecones. See how many items children can find on a list or gather objects to add to a collection.
- **Have a ball.** Kicking a soccer ball or playing catch together can be fine if you are apart from each other and avoid sharing sports equipment with others outside your household.

The benefits of being outside

Getting outside provides more than a fun break for children. It is also good for their physical and mental health and development. They can be:

- **Physically healthier.** Children play harder outdoors than indoors.
- **More engaged in learning.** Playing outside promotes more curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking.
- **More positive in behavior.** Research has found that when children spent time in natural settings they had less anger and aggression. Impulse control also improves.
- **Mentally healthier.** Stress and depression are lower for all people who spend time in nature.

ABC's for COVID-19

Remember: **A**dvantage of the [healing in nature](#) is in your own backyard or on a walk. **B**e sure to follow local public health guidelines about [wearing masks](#) and keep at least 6 feet from others not in your family. **C**lean your surroundings and [wash your hands](#) with soap and water or use [hand sanitizer](#) during and after your adventure.



For more information click on links below.

- www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org
- www.letsmove.gov
- www.kidshealth.org
- www.healthychildren.org
- [September National Health Observances: Childhood Obesity, Food Safety and Education, Healthy Aging, and Recovery Awareness](#)

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