



# Connecting with Nature

## Children Aged 3-5

### Introduction

Research shows that connecting with nature, or being outdoors, is important for healthy physical, emotional, and social development. Outdoor play supports success in school, healthy relationships, and stress management.



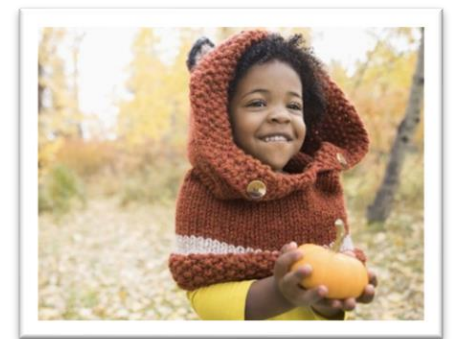
### Benefits of spending time in nature

#### Increases physical activity and physical development

- Keeps children's hearts, lungs, and bones healthy, and lowers kids' risk of becoming overweight
- Increases fitness, balance, and coordination
- Physical activity can help children manage symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

#### Improves cognition and attention

- Being outside allows kids to clear their minds and restore their focus
- Outdoor play leads to greater [success in school](#)



#### Better mental health and social skills

- Improves mood and helps children control their emotions
- Promotes friendly behaviour and healthy relationships
- Find more information about the mental health benefits of nature at [Child & Nature Network](#)

#### Exposure to sunlight

- Increases vitamin D production which is necessary for bone growth and a healthy immune system
- Practice [sun safety](#) by using sunscreen, hats, and appropriate clothing, and limiting unprotected sun exposure to 15 minutes/day

#### Letting kids get dirty

Exposure to many different friendly [microbes](#) found in dirt, leaves, and sand is beneficial to your child.

- Helps kids develop a strong immune system
- May decrease children's risk of developing diseases such as allergies, asthma, obesity, and diabetes
- For more information, read [Mud, Marvelous Mud!](#) or visit [letthemeatdirt.com](#)
- Tip: Use proper [handwashing techniques](#) to clean up afterwards



#### Caring for the environment

Helping kids love nature is good for the planet. When children connect with nature, they have more respect for the environment and are more inclined to lead a sustainable life.





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### Indigenous perspectives

Indigenous peoples of Canada have valued learning and play in nature for thousands of years.

- Nature teaches lessons of patience, courage, and cooperation; its role as a teacher should be celebrated
- Earth provides us with food, water, and a home; Earth should be honoured and protected
- Connecting with the land us helps build relationships with materials, plants, and animals
- Find out more about First Nations [learning with the natural world](#)

### Helpful tips

#### Nature-based activities

- The [5 Senses Game](#) helps kids calm down and connect with nature. Ask your child to name 5 things s/he sees, 4 things s/he feels, 3 things s/he hears, 2 things s/he smells, and 1 thing s/he tastes.
- Try a 15-minute [Nature Scavenger Hunt](#) around your neighborhood
- Playing Simon Says in an outdoor space helps children manage their emotions and behaviour
- Find a [Sit Spot](#): a special place your child can go to take 3 deep Bear Breaths, feel grounded, and develop an awareness of nature



#### Explore nature together

Experiencing nature with your child encourages family bonding without any distractions. It also helps you de-stress and recharge so you can be a better caregiver.

- Learn more from the [Children & Nature Network](#)

#### What if I'm too busy?

A lot can get in the way of spending time in nature. If you are short on time or space, try these alternatives:

- Bring plants into your home or [grow your own](#) indoor plants
- Read books with themes or pictures of nature
- Listen to [nature sounds](#) during quiet time
- Walk to and from school instead of driving
- Go outside in [any weather](#); just make sure to warm up and dry off afterwards



### Resources

- [Child and Nature Alliance of Canada](#)
- [Create a Family Nature Club](#)
- [23 Nature Activities for Kids](#)
- [Find Local Greenspace](#)
- [Mindfulness for Kids](#)
- Local Nature Programs: [Fresh Air Learning](#) and [Nature Kids BC](#)
- Caring for Kids: [Physical Activity for Your Preschooler](#)
- Teachers: [Nature Lesson Plans for Kids](#)

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