

H PEDIATRIC UNIT

The Importance of Outdoor Play for Children

As a parent, I love watching the joy that outdoor play brings to my children! It is a natural feeling for humans to enjoy the outside, it's how we evolved and part of our being. It's also essential to the health and development of our children, no matter what the weather brings. There is scientific evidence that outdoor play in children makes them physically healthier by decreasing their risk for obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure. It also makes them mentally healthier by improving sleep quality, decreasing stress and depression, less anger and aggression and more impulse control. It also promotes creativity, curiosity and problem solving in children, and has been shown to lead to improved learning outcomes.

Ideas for outdoor play

- Take infants and small children outside in a carrier or stroller. Allow them to experience different textures and sounds and smells in nature. Lay down a blanket on the grass and let them explore!
- Encourage young and school age children to explore and create crafts and sculptures with twigs, leaves, rocks, cones, acorns, flowers, etc.
- Play with bubbles and chalk
- Bike rides and walks through the woods or parks and neighborhoods
- Outdoor playdates
- Programming throughout local parks and recreation departments
- Read a story on a blanket in the grass/shade
- Create a scavenger hunt
- Play sports, kick a ball, throw a frisbee, play hopscotch
- Pack a picnic or BBQ with friends and family
- Let the kids help with outdoor chores like weeding, watering the garden, etc.
- Bring out old kitchen equipment and let them play in the mud
- Hide and seek
- Puddle jumping



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Explore our local playgrounds, parks and gardens in Hendricks County

- **Avon:** Avon Gardens, Avon Town Hall Park, Burnett Woods State Nature Preserve, Gable Park, Pecar Park, Washington Township Park, W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park
- **Brownsburg:** Arbuckle Acres Park, Cardinal Park, McCammon's Irish Market, Natural Valley Ranch, Stephens Park, Williams Park
- **Danville:** Ellis Park, Gill Family Aquatic Center
- **North Salem:** McCloud Nature Park
- **Pittsboro:** Scamahorn Park
- **Plainfield:** Anderson Park, Franklin Park, Friendship Gardens Park, Guilford Township Hummel Park, Sodalis Nature Park, Splash Island Family Water Park, Swinford Park, Talon Stream Park

Sources: Parkrxamerica.org, healthychildren.org, visithendrickscounty.com

Should a situation arise in which your child needs to be admitted to a hospital, remember that Hendricks Regional Health's dedicated pediatric unit is staffed 24/7 to care for children from birth to 18 years. Learn more at hendricks.org/pediatrics.