

15 Reasons to Take Children Outside in the Winter

There is no
such thing
as bad
weather,
only bad
clothing.



Even when it is cold and gray, children should go outside. There are so many benefits for children when they play outside. Too many children are spending too much time inside during the winter months. Too often adults say that the children won't like the cold. If dressed properly, the children will be fine. AND if the adults are dressed properly, they will fine too!

Of course, in inclement weather, children should not be outside. But if it is just cold, bundle up, and go out. Even infants will benefit from the fresh air.

Why? Because playing outside –

1. Fresh air is healthy and has fewer germs than inside air – getting fresh air can actually combat illnesses and help prevent children from contracting illness from other kids.
2. Builds up children's immune system – When children play in dirt and other natural materials naturally (outside), they are less likely to develop autoimmune disorders and allergies.
3. Provides exercise – Exercise is fun and gets children's bodies moving. They have longer attention spans.
4. Provides vitamin D – Vitamin D comes from the sun. It helps us all have better moods, energy levels, memory, overall health, and builds strong bones.
5. Stimulates the imagination – Children get to decide what they want to do and create stories around their activities.
6. Promotes problem solving skills - Children who play outside learn how to solve real life problems better than children who play inside with video games or teacher directed activities. They are problem solving when they figure out how to get along with friends or how best to build a fort. They become better at making friends.
7. It is okay for children to be loud outside.
8. Children who play outside are have less nearsightedness and need eye glasses less.
9. Children are calmer after being outside.
10. There is more space to run and for big muscle play.
11. There is less setup and clean up to be done.
12. The materials (air, mud, sticks, rocks, flowers, leaves) are free and encourage children to be creative.
13. Children learn to appreciate nature and love the outdoors. Going outside in the winter gives children a different view of the natural world.

14. Children who see adults playing outside, including teachers and parents, learn that it is healthy to go outside in the winter
and
15. **OCFS regulations** - Daily supervised outdoor play is required for all children in care, except during inclement or extreme weather or unless otherwise ordered by a health care provider. – 1.7 Program Requirements: 416-(h), 417 (h), 418 (k)

When?

How do you know if it is too cold to go outside? Use the Weather Watch. It will tell you when it is too hot or too cold to take children outside.

How?

When children are dressed appropriately and warmly with suitable clothing to keep them dry, they should be able to play outdoors in most all temperatures. Layers will keep them warm, but also ensure they don't get overheated as they play.

- * Dress everyone in layers – even infants and toddlers. Several thin layers will keep them dry and warm – warm boots, gloves or mittens, and a hat. Dressing for the weather is important.
- * The rule of thumb for older babies and young children is to dress them in one more layer of clothing than an adult would wear in the same conditions.
- * Set reasonable time limits on outdoor play to prevent hypothermia and frostbite. Even going outside for 10 minutes is worthwhile.
- * Have children come inside periodically to warm up if necessary.
- * Always wear a hat where most of the body's heat is lost when outdoors. Hats help children keep a warmer body temperature.
- * Watch children to ensure they are not sweating, since sweat gets cold when it touches the skin and starts to evaporate. Sweat can chill them quickly when it gets exposed to the cold air as they remove layers.

HAVE FUN!!

Resources:

- * <http://families.naeyc.org/content/11-reasons-take-kids-outside>
- * <http://mommiesmagazine.com/10580/children-play-outside-winter/>
- * <http://richmondmom.com/2012/01/07/playing-outdoors-in-winter-can-help-prevent-colds-and-flu/>
- * <http://www.wisebread.com/50-ways-to-have-free-outdoor-fun>