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- The Importance of Playing Outside
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PLAY SAFELY Outside with these Tips:

- Drink Plenty of Water
- Wear Sunscreen
- Use bug repellent
- Watch for mouthing and choking hazards
- Children should always be supervised by an adult

Easterseals
Southeast Wisconsin
2222 S. 114th Street
West Allis, WI 53227
414-449-4444

It's Spring! Get outside with your child and play!

It is important to take infants and toddlers outdoors for play. Infants and toddlers are at the stage in life where they are making sense of the world around them. Like little sponges, children soak up every noise, sound, and experience they have. Being outdoors is enjoyable and a critical part of their overall development.

Why play outside?

- Being outdoors stimulates a child's senses and increases their knowledge about the world around them.
- Increased knowledge helps with early language development, which gives them a good foundation for later reading.
- Watching and playing with adults and other children outside helps infants and toddlers develop social skills.
- Being outside helps infants with physical development —giving them new, exciting things to look at while sitting or laying.
- A toddler's physical development is helped by providing open space for movement.

Find time every day to be outside with your child. Be sure to dress appropriately and bundle up well when it's cold to prevent illness! *Follow our Play Safely tips to the left.*

Need ideas for outdoor play?

Age 0-3 months:

- Lay your baby on a blanket on the ground.
- Point out and name leaves, trees, and flowers.
- Describe sounds your child is hearing.

Age 3-6 months:

- Lay your baby on a blanket onto her stomach.
- Bring out objects the baby can hold.
- Let the baby feel natural objects.
- Describe sounds your child is hearing.

Age 6-9 months:

- Let your child touch the grass and other textures.
- Provide tunnels and balls.

Age 9-12 months:

- Let your child play with balls, bubbles, and toys.
- Help your child practice standing.
- Provide push toys if your child is walking.
- Attach musical toys or mirrors to a fence at their height to look at or reach for.

Age 1-3 years:

- Bring riding toys, trikes, wagons to pull, or large trucks to push.
- Bring music outside for the child to practice dancing and jumping.
- Simple obstacle courses outside for the child to climb over and under.
- Grow a garden so your child can learn about plants.
- Play with water in a bucket or from a sprinkler. *(With close adult supervision!)*

Try these Outdoor Activities

"Children learn best through their everyday experiences with the people they love and trust, and when the learning is fun. And the best place for these experiences is outdoors, in the natural world."

- Center for Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning

More outdoor ideas:

- Look at bugs
- Have a picnic in the park
- Use a crayon to rub paper over a leaf or some tree bark
- Watch trees change over seasons

Digging for Treasure

Materials:

- Small objects to hide
Avoid choking hazards!
- Shovels
- Colander
- Sandbox or dirt

Directions:

1. Hide small objects in the sandbox for your toddler to find as he digs about.
2. Try using an old kitchen colander to sift through the sand.
3. If you like, paint rocks in shiny silver and gold, and show your toddler how to search for hidden treasure.

If you don't have a sandbox, hide things under a blanket, or in a pile of leaves!

Shadow Tracing

Materials:

- Chalk

Directions:

1. Go outside with your child on a sunny day.
2. If your child will stand still long enough, trace his shadow on the sidewalk or driveway.
3. Have him change positions, then trace his shadow again.
4. Make several tracings, then see if your child can fit his shadow back inside the tracings.

For a fun alternative, trace his shadow on a big sheet of newsprint or other paper. Let him finger paint his shadow or color it with crayons or markers.

Milwaukee: Outdoors (and FREE)!

Check out these FREE local, family-friendly, outdoor activities in your neighborhood:

1. Visit your favorite animals at the **Milwaukee County Zoo**, free for children, 0-2 years. Reduced admission every day with your Milwaukee County ID. Every Wednesday, Milw. Co. residents show your ID and get admission for \$8 for adults, \$5.50 ages 3-12.
2. Take part in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources **free fishing clinics for kids** on April 22nd! <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Fishing/documents/anglereducation/SERClinicsSpring2017.pdf>
3. Check out the **Family Kite Festival** at Veteran's Park on Memorial Day Weekend, May 27th and 28th.
4. Have some fun at a **local parish church festival**. These fun block-party type events often feature games, rides, music and more.
5. Traverse the **Oak Leaf Trail** by bike, skates or feet. This extensive trail winds its way throughout the city, and is a great way to experience some greenery without leaving town. <http://county.milwaukee.gov/OakLeafTrail8289.htm>
6. Check out **your neighborhood park**. Many have playgrounds and trails!

For a low-cost option, check out the **Urban Ecology Center** in Washington Park, Riverside Park, or the Menomonee Valley. If your family becomes a member, you'll have access to their outdoor equipment, classes, and summer camps! Call their office at 414-344-5460 for more information.

For more information on these and other topics, please visit the following:

ClaytonEarlyLearning.org

FamilyEducation.com

AAP.org

Pathways.org

NatureRocks.org

Families.NAEYC.org