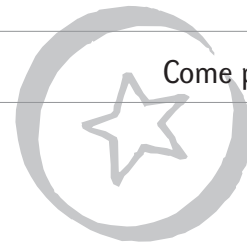




from
Providence Children's Museum



Come play, come learn!

Get Out!

By Megan Fischer, Visitor Services and Volunteer Manager

It's spring! Flowers are blooming and it's finally warm enough for you and your kids to play outdoors after a long winter cooped up inside.

My happiest childhood memories are of playing outside. My sister and I would go on adventures around our neighborhood or even in our own backyard. We built forts, collected rocks and made "perfume" from a neighbor's rose bushes. I also had a secret outdoor space, usually a special tree or grove, that was a world all my own.

Most children today grow up with more limited exposure to the natural world than I was fortunate to have. Many children live in neighborhoods where there isn't much nature to see or where traffic and other safety concerns prevent them from playing outdoors. Kids also have an increasing number of pressures and after school commitments – more lessons, more sports, more homework, more worries – which means they simply don't have enough time to play, let alone play outside.

Playing outdoors promotes children's healthy growth and development. In an age where childhood obesity is an alarming problem, indoor activities like watching television and playing video games can't compete with the physical benefits of outside play. Being outdoors is a calming, even therapeutic, experience that can give children a break from their day-to-day worries and



help build their self-esteem. It encourages kids to notice and appreciate the sheer wonder of the natural world. Navigating that world through outdoor play enhances the development of judgment and problem solving skills and stimulates children's imagination and creativity.

Taking your kids outside to play is good for them – and you, too! It's a great way to relax and have fun as a family, there are so many things you can do together. Start by going on a nature walk in a park or around your neighborhood. Take paper and crayons and do rubbings of the bark of different trees. Collect leaves and twigs for an art project. Follow a line of ants to see where they're going and what obstacles are in their way. Maybe select nature books from the library and

see how many kinds of birds and bugs you can spot.

You can spend time outside when you and your family visit Providence Children's Museum. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in the Children's Garden, where you can splash in the water fountain, play games, make music, watch birds and discover a host of plants native to Rhode Island.

So get outside and play! You and your children will be happier and healthier, and have a lot of fun in the process.

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