

The H-N REACH EarlyON at Home

FAMILY NEWSLETTER

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Outdoor play is one of the most important and most underutilized forms of play in the history of early childhood education. Getting outside is more important now than ever, especially with the extra time we have with young ones during the pandemic. Canadian experts from across the country state that "access to active play in nature and outdoors - with its risks - is essential for healthy child development." (retrieved from <http://bit.ly/position-on-play>). We know that there are plenty of benefits of playing outside, including: increased resilience, self-regulation, and skills for dealing with stress (we could all use more of that, couldn't we?); improved overall fitness from the exercise; children learning to balance risky play and their own safety, and; an appreciation for nature that the future of our planet may depend on. In the following pages, you'll find ideas of what can be done outdoors with little ones, how to make sure your child is safe and how to enjoy outside as a family.



WHEN IN DOUBT - LET THEM OUT!

As mentioned earlier, a group of Canadian experts from 14 organizations across our country, highlighted how important outdoor play is to healthy child development. They also recommend that we increase our children's opportunities for "self-directed play at home" (Joel Barnes, outdoorplaycanada.ca, 2019). But what is self-directed play, you ask? Self-directed play simply means that a child is calling the shots in their play. They are in charge of what they're playing, what they're playing with, and the creative and imaginative content of the play. As parents, we often instinctually feel the need to jump in and show children the 'right way' of doing things. Give yourself permission to just step back and allow the play to flow, watching how your child will discover their own outcomes. The following are just a couple of ideas of what you can do to support self-directed play outside for children:

Mud Kitchen

Near a sandbox or dirt patch outside, set up a pretend 'mud kitchen'. Wearing play clothes, allow the children to explore, mix, pour, squish and concoct using dirt, water, basins, bowls, spoons, whisks, muffin trays, and saucepans! Prepare for hours of fun and mess!

From a Child's Perspective Hike

Let your child lead you on a hike. Give them a camera to take photos of things that interest them. Bring along a picnic even.

Water Table

Set out buckets of water (either on a table, or on the ground) in various sizes. Give them spoons to stir with, measuring cups to pour with, whisks to whip with, and some soap to pour in (ok, maybe you should do that part!). Make sure there's some shade, as some kids will spend hours playing with water - or follow our advice and links on sun safety in the upcoming articles.

BOXES GALORE!

Grab a bunch of large boxes and connect them together using tape. You can do this outside with the kids, cutting holes for windows or skylights. Feel free to contact large appliance stores to see if you could have some of their boxes for added fun. And don't worry about the weather - if it rains, it's fun to ask the children what's happening to the cardboard boxes and observe the changes!



WHAT TO BE WARY OF . . .

Ticks

Unfortunately, Haldimand and Norfolk are breeding grounds for deer or blacklegged ticks - the kind that carry Lyme disease. They can't jump or fly, but will attach themselves as you walk by. When hiking, stay on trails and avoid bushy areas with tall grass and leaf litter.

Wear light coloured clothes to help you see ticks more easily. For more information about ticks, and about how to identify and remove them, check out <https://ticktalkcanada.com/>



Poison Ivy

Haldimand and Norfolk counties also play host to the pest of the plant world, poison ivy. We've all heard the little rhyme 'Leaves of three, let them be!', and in our communities, it is something to certainly watch out for. Learn to identify the plants, avoid the areas where they grow, and wear long sleeves and pants when you're in areas that may contain them. For more information, check out <https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/poison-ivy.html>. For any older children you may have at home, check out this lesson about poison ivy at <https://study.com/academy/lesson/poison-ivy-lesson-for-kids.html>

SUMMER SUN SAFETY

The summer sun brings the summer heat and heat affects everybody. Did you know that children's bodies are less efficient at cooling than adults? This makes them more vulnerable to heat-related illnesses such as dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

To avoid heat-related illnesses, be sure that water is always available and you and your children drink lots throughout the day, before you become thirsty. When possible, encourage your children to play in a shady area and to take frequent breaks from vigorous play to rest and cool down. Always supervise your children while they are playing in the heat and watch for signs of heat distress. It is a good idea to be aware of and follow any heat warnings set out by Environment Canada (see weather apps for more information). Here are some other 'sun sense' tips to follow, provided by the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit at <https://hnhu.org/health-topic/sun-safety/>

- If at all possible, try to plan any outdoor activities before 11 am and after 4 pm
- Keep babies under 12 months out of direct sunlight
- Wear broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher
- Wear a hat that protects the face and the back of the neck
- Don't forget your sunglasses!

BEFORE WE EVER PUT A PENCIL IN A CHILD'S HANDS, THOSE HANDS SHOULD DIG, CLIMB, PRESS, PULL, SQUISH, TWIST AND PUNCH IN A WIDE ARRAY OF ENVIRONMENTS AND A WIDE VARIETY OF MATERIALS.

Amanda Morgan



OUTDOOR COOKING WITH KIDS!?!

As we enter the season of camping and campfires, it's important to know that you can do some outdoor cooking with your children helping you! With a little patience, some prep work and safety in mind, cooking outside with your children can be a really rewarding experience for all. Why should we be teaching outdoor cooking? According to Julia from <https://culinatour.com>, children have a lot to learn from cooking outside:

Increases self-sufficiency: Equipping your child with outdoor cooking skills gives them a solid head start in being able to cook and provide for themselves in the future.

Encourages responsibility: When you assign a meal to a young chef, you're instilling incredible responsibility in them. Even if it's something as small as an evening snack, you're sending a positive message to your child about your belief in their abilities to do the work and contribute to the family.

Foster creativity: Cooking is the ultimate art form and a fabulous way to foster creative thinking in children. Let them use their imagination when plating a dish or even tweaking a recipe and enjoy!

Excellent all-around education: Cooking is a great way to learn and master concepts for math, science and comprehension. That's right! Reading and understanding a recipe is comprehension; making sense of measurements and portions is all about math; and, the process of cooking is a great way to learn about science!

Still not convinced that cooking outdoors with kids is the right fit for you?

Try these tips to help:

- **Plan to succeed:** Plan out your meals with help from the kids. Look at recipes online and let them pick out what they'd like to have. Some great kid friendly recipes can be found online. Check out this site for ideas: <https://www.activekids.com/parenting-and-family/articles/8-campfire-recipes-kids-love-to-make/>
- **Prep work is key:** Let them help! Young children can wash produce, line up ingredients, and measure or count. Let older children help with chopping, peeling, slicing or grating.
- **Start the fire:** You may not want young children to help you light the fire, but they can help by picking up the kindling for you. It's great exercise and still gets them involved!
- **Messes are welcome:** When kids cook, messes happen. You may not be able to avoid this, but here's a great opportunity to have them involved in helping with cleaning up their mess!
- **Start off small:** Maybe it's just with marshmallows or hot dogs over the campfire, but it will spark their curiosity for your future outings!

Retrieved from: <https://runwildmychild.com/outdoor-cooking-with-kids/>



Despite the hardships we've all endured over the past few months with the pandemic, we need to remember that there have been positives that have come from this time of isolation, and we should be talking to our children about these experiences. What have they enjoyed about the isolation? What aspects might they want to take with them into their "new normal", eg: more time with family, less busy schedule, new hobbies or routines. Give time to listen, and even list their ideas down to reflect on when this is over.

*A message brought to you by our Clinical Unit at
Haldimand-Norfolk REACH*

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Ok - we have talked about outdoor cooking with links to recipes, , so how about a play recipe?

Monster Bubble Recipe

6 cups of water

1 cup of dish soap (the blue Dawn works best)

1 tablespoon of glycerin (or 1/4 cup of corn syrup)

1. Slowly add dish soap to the water.
2. Gently stir in and try not to create any foam/bubbles.
3. Add glycerin or corn syrup and mix gently.
4. Create your own wands with 2 straws as handles and yarn looped through them and tied!



We must stop looking at contact with Nature as a problem to fix and start looking at contact with Nature as a solution to the problems we must solve.

Adam Bienenstock



WE ARE STILL HERE FOR YOU!

Yes, things have changed a lot over the past month, but we are still here to help! Haldimand-Norfolk REACH is considered an essential service, and even though our sites are closed, we are working at home to stay connected with everyone, and to help those in need during these turbulent times.

If you or your child are in crisis, our Child and Youth Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 1-866-327-3224

Feel free to find us on Facebook - we are the Haldimand-Norfolk REACH EarlyON Child and Family Centre! We're always posting activity ideas, circle time videos and stories, and tips to stay healthy at home.

Have an idea you'd like to see us try? Email us at earlyon@hnreach.on.ca

