

HealthPoint

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Outdoor Play

Who is excited for Spring weather to get here? I know I am. Getting outside and getting fresh air is good for everyone of all ages! It helps to build immune systems while providing more room to play and explore. Playing outdoors is a great way to create unforgettable memories and to bond with siblings, friends and parents. You don't need to have a lot of equipment or toys to play outside, just use your imagination. Below are ideas of different games and activities to play with your child outside. Try to get outdoors and enjoy the sunshine while incorporating some of the purposeful play ideas. Remember that whether it's for a short or long period of time, all movement matters! Just do not forget to wear bug spray and suntan lotion!

1. Hide and seek

- A classic game that is so much fun to play outside ! Just make sure that you set boundaries for your kids in case we have any great hiders out there.
- The game is as simple as the name, one person is the seeker and the rest of the group tries to hide as best as they can. The seeker tries to find all of the friends that are hiding.
- This is a good way to work on motor planning, strength and endurance.
- You can also play hide and seek with a stuffed animal where you or your child hides the animal or object and then the other has to try to go and find it!
- Give verbal hints to your child at where you hid the object such as “look up high” or “ look near something green”. These descriptive words are used daily and will help your child’s development while they are away from school.



2. Obstacle courses

- Obstacle courses are a great way to work on your child's motor planning, strength, balance and endurance!
- Get really creative with things that you have laying around the house! You can use a board or tape to walk on as a balance beam, step or hop over sticks or hurdles, step on pillows to work balance, use hula hoops to crawl through or even incorporate using a ball.
- If you have sidewalk chalk, you can also draw different lines and patterns to perform locomotor skills. Check out YouTube for great motor pathways for ideas!
- Have your kids help you think of different obstacles for the course too! They can get super creative and will feel accomplished when they are able to complete their own obstacles.
- Get in the game! Many children love to compete against their parents in games so join in and see who can complete the obstacle course first!



3. Bubbles

- Bubbles are a good way to work on visual motor coordination needed for skills like catching a ball
- Make it fun and challenging by having your child use different body parts to pop the bubbles with. Use verbal prompts such as “lets only use our feet this time to pop the bubbles” or “hands only to pop bubbles”. You can also work on counting skills by having your child count how many bubbles they can pop before they hit the ground.
- Have your child run or spin with the bubble wand to help integrate sensory techniques.



4. Scavenger hunt

- Walking around the yard is a good way to work motor planning, balance, strength and endurance while exploring the outdoors. To make this fun, try having them find different items around the yard! You can use the internet to find a scavenger hunt list or make up your own.
- Try to incorporate common items around the yard such as rocks, leaves and plants, into your list of objects to find. As always supervision of your child with walking around the yard is recommended so that they don't wander into anything unsafe and dangerous.



5. Ball play

- By the age of 3, your child should be able to catch a playground ball from about 5 feet away and kick a slow rolling ball. At age 4, your child should be able to catch a small ball with hands only and kick a slow rolling ball with good accuracy. At age 5, your child should be dribbling a ball for a couple repetitions.
- Catching, throwing, kicking and dribbling are important skills for children that help with the development of balance, coordination, strength and oppositional movements.
- Remember when playing ball with your child, always start where your child is at. Start with a larger ball for catching and throwing, and then progress to a smaller tennis sized ball if the larger ball is starting to become easy for them. Start throwing with an underhand pattern and then progress to an overhand pattern. Once they have the overhand and underhand throwing pattern down, progress to having your child to work on oppositional movement patterns by having them throw with one hand and step with the opposite foot. Use verbal prompts such as “step and throw”. You may also use a visual prompt such as a piece of tape so they remember which foot to step with.
- For kicking, start with a stationary ball and then progress to a slow rolling ball. Challenge your child by rolling the ball from further distances and have them kick it back to you. Give your child a target to aim for like getting the ball back to your hands or using a tower of cups to knock down.
- Be patient with your child and remember that practice makes perfect!



6. Playground

- **In the current situation, most public playgrounds are closed. We want you to follow the stay at home orders that are in place and are **not** encouraging you to go to a public playground, but if you have your own equipment in the backyard, have your child play on it!
- Utilizing playgrounds are a great way to work on strength, endurance, balance and motor planning.
- If your child walks on their toes, have your kid walk up to slide (even though you've told them multiple times not to). Walking up the slide helps to stretch out the calf muscles and helps to encourage that heel strike when they are walking.
- Push your child on the swing! This can help to engage and strengthen the core muscles in your child. Use verbal prompts to sit more upright and to keep tummy muscles tight when on the swing. If your child is old enough, try to have them work on pumping their legs. Most kids enjoy swinging and it can help to calm your child down by integrating some sensory techniques.
- Monkey bars are a great way to work on upper body strengthening. It helps to strengthen and stabilize the joints in the shoulder and scapula. It also works on your child's core strength as they have to fight to move to the next bar.
- Tunnels are a good way to work on weight bearing through both upper and lower extremities. Crawling position also helps to work on core strength and oppositional movement patterns.



Remember to have fun with your children and always think safety first! There are many different ideas for more outdoor play activities that you can find on the internet or in magazines. For weekly updates on different purposeful play activities, follow us on Instagram @pedsmoveptot!! Enjoy the sunshine!