



# K-State Extension Connection

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The mission of K-State Research and Extension Family and Consumer Sciences is to link education with life experiences to help people improve their lives, their families and their communities. Family and Consumer Sciences professionals support essential life skills including Community Development, Healthy Lifestyle Choices, Leadership & Volunteer Development, Relationship Development and Resource Management.

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## Children and Nature

Outdoor activity and access to nature promotes the health, development and well-being of children and youth and forms the foundation for responsible environmental behavior as children grow up. Outdoor activity and play look different as children grow. However, each development stage presents a window of opportunity during which nature can make a difference in children's readiness for the next phase and in their ultimate outcomes. Research has shown many benefits of nature.

- Outdoor play improves physical abilities and coordination. Preschool children who play among rocks and trees and who move over uneven ground develop stronger skills in motor coordination, balance and agility than those who play on conventional playgrounds.
- Access to nature improves concentration and attention. Middle and high school students, who have access to green spaces in their backyards and schoolyards, and simply more natural views from their bedroom and classroom windows, are better able to concentrate. Children with ADHD display fewer symptoms after a walk in nature and playing outdoors.
- Outdoor play encourages the development of social skills. Pro-social behaviors and quality of social interactions increase when children spend time in nature.

- Young children who learn outdoors are more ready for school including improved early literacy skills.
- Nature boosts achievement. Students achieve at higher levels when they receive instruction that uses the environment as an integrating context for learning.
- Time in nature busts stress and enhances emotional health. Children of all ages, and especially those who experience high levels of stress, are more calm and happy and demonstrate more resilience the more they are exposed to green spaces and natural environments.
- Outdoor activity promotes fitness and health. From increasing physical activity levels for the prevention of obesity, to decreasing asthma symptoms, to easing the symptoms of depression and anxiety, to improving nearsightedness, outdoor activity is good for children's (and adult's) physical and mental health and well-being.
- We protect what we love. Outdoor experiences are critical to developing attitudes and behaviors that protect the environment. People that participate in nature-based outdoor activities as children are more likely to have attitudes favorable toward the environment and engage in behaviors that are protective of the environment.

So this Fall get outside with the children in your life. Whether they are months old or teenagers outdoor activities are beneficial for all.

For questions or additional information please contact:

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If you have a program or educational need for your group or organization please contact one of our Wildcat District Extension offices.

Source:

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