



# Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

- 10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care**
- ★ Build trusting relationships
  - ★ Provide consistent care
  - ★ Support children's health
  - ★ **Provide a safe environment**
  - ★ Provide positive guidance
  - ★ Provide a language-rich environment
  - ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
  - ★ Individualize care and learning activities
  - ★ Partner with parents
  - ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

**This Month's Hallmarks of Quality Child Care**  
Provide a Safe Environment

## Outdoor Activities for Young Children

According to Caring for Our Children, infants (birth to 12 months) should spend time outside two to three times per day, for as long as they can tolerate it. Toddlers and preschoolers should be allowed 60 to 90 total minutes of outdoor play daily.

There is strong evidence that young children experience significant benefits from spending time being active outdoors. For example:

- **Overall fitness level and prevention of childhood obesity.** Regularly spending time outdoors increases opportunities for children to crawl, walk, climb, and run, which improve large motor skills.
- **Enhanced opportunities to problem solve.** Children learn cause and effect while making connections through exploration of natural objects and materials.
- **Improved communication skills and social interaction.** There are increased opportunities for children to play with others through turn taking and sharing.
- **Increased creativity and imagination.** Being outdoors provides countless opportunities for discovery and creativity as children explore the materials in their natural environment.
- **Connection to nature** – As children learn about nature, they begin to develop a connection with, and appreciation for, the natural world.

Despite these benefits, there is a common concern—and one that often limits outdoor play— safety. Here are some general guidelines to keep in mind.

- Many injuries and accidents can be prevented with careful supervision.
- Do a daily check of outdoor equipment for possible hazards.
- Teach children how to be safe and act responsibly when outdoors.

This newsletter will discuss age-appropriate outdoor materials and activities, as well as safety precautions for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.



## Setting Up the Outdoor Space

When setting up an outdoor area for the children in your care, think about how you can use the space as an extension of their learning environment. Just like the indoor space, safety and consideration of the children's ages, abilities, development and interests, should be things to keep in mind. Here's some ideas to help get you started:

- **Visibility of children** – ensure that the children will be visible to you at all times.
- **Open spaces** – have enough room for the children to move freely without getting into each other's way; including a space for infants and young toddlers to play safely.
- **Variety of materials for all types of play** – for example, active (balls and riding toys), sensory (shovels, musical instruments, bubbles), and imaginative play (cardboard boxes, picnic set).
- **Shade and soft spaces** – utilize large umbrellas, cushions, and picnic blankets with a variety of materials such as books.
- **Opportunities to connect to nature and natural elements** – plants for gardening, sticks, leaves, shells, magnifying glass/binoculars to observe insects and birds.
- **Storing materials** – use an outdoor cabinet or have materials in a basket that you can easily take in and out of the house.



## Outdoor Play for Infants

Infants are little scientists. They actively investigate the world using all their senses and seem to have no fear when it comes to exploring with their hands, mouths, or entire bodies. Spending time outdoors is a rich and important part of the daily routine for infants.

Here are some age-appropriate outdoor activities for infants:

- Take baby to areas with a variety of sensory experiences; places where she can see, touch, and smell- such as, flowering plants, chirping birds, or sprinkling water.
- Encourage her to feel the rough bark of a tree, soft grass, and textures of large stones.
- Set baby down on her stomach so that she can be on grassy areas and feel leaves and dirt.
- Point out trees, ducks, or airplanes, while saying the words for each object several times.

Infants do not yet understand what is safe or not safe or how to protect themselves. They need responsible adults to minimize outdoor health and safety risks and eliminate the most dangerous hazards so that they can explore and play safely. The most important things to keep in mind when taking infants outdoors are appropriate supervision (making sure that you can see and hear them) and ensuring that all equipment is appropriate for their age.

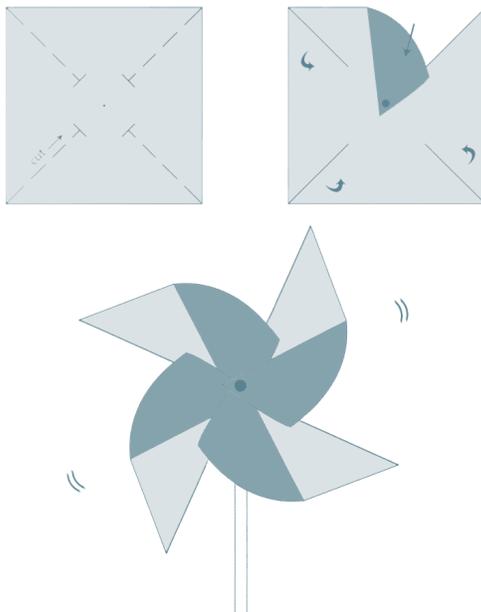
# Outdoor Play for Toddlers

When toddlers are playing outdoors, they are hard at work learning important physical skills, gaining muscle control, balance, and coordination. Each new skill lets them progress to the next one; building on a foundation that leads to more complicated physical tasks, such as jumping rope, kicking a ball on the run, or turning a cartwheel.

You can encourage physical development by introducing these outdoor activities to toddlers:

- Give toddlers some soaking wet sponges. Let them wash a tricycle, play with dishes, or make sponge shapes on the sidewalk. Show them how to squeeze water out of the sponge.
- Make your own bubble solution using 6 cups water, 1 cup liquid dish soap, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup corn syrup. Using bubble wands or items found at home (pipe cleaner or new fly swatters), have the children run and chase the bubbles.

As you take toddlers outdoors, think of safety preparedness by having the following items handy in case of an injury or emergency: a phone, emergency contacts, and a first aid kit, which includes any medications that children may need.



# Outdoor Play for Preschoolers

Being outdoors allows preschoolers opportunities for more active movement and games that help them to practice following directions and interacting with others. You can use outdoor activities as a way to encourage preschoolers to build their safety awareness by having them understand the rules. For example, “It’s OK to run outside because there’s plenty of space” or “We take turns on the slide so that no one gets hurt.” You can encourage active movement through activities such as rolling large balls; playing catch and riding wheeled toys; dancing, singing or moving to music. Unstructured time allows them to learn important skills, use their imaginations, and offers time to wind down.

Here are some activities that preschoolers can do outdoors:

- Create an outdoor scavenger hunt where the children collect items from nature. Talk about the items they should find and give them reminders about where the items may be.
- Create a pinwheel using a square paper and disposable wooden chopsticks. Fold the paper in half diagonally to form a triangle, then in half again to form a smaller triangle. Unfold the paper and cut  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the way to the center of the square along each crease line. Bring every other point of the cut paper to the center of the square and overlap them. Push a pin through the 4 points of the center and poke the pin to one end of the chopstick. Use the pinwheel on a windy day and encourage the children think of ways to make it move.



## Citations:

American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs*, 4th ed. Itasca, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2019. <http://nrckids.org/files/CFOC4 pdf- FINAL.pdf>

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## Reflection Sheet, Award Book, and Training Certificates

- Primary providers and adult members who fill out the caregiver's reflection sheet and return it by the posted deadline to the Learning to Grow Program are *guaranteed* a children's book in return. A postage-paid envelope is provided.
- Providers who thoughtfully complete the reflection sheet **question #5** can be awarded a certificate indicating one hour of training completed. Training hours will align with the topic areas required to meet DHS requirements.
- Reflection sheets do not need to be returned by the due date in order to earn the certificate. However, the supply of award books is limited and after the due date, award books will be sent only as available.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.



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