

Why Outdoor Play is Important

By Julie Oliver, Homes Supervisor

Spring is upon us and in Florida that means some beautiful warm sunny days. Playing outside, especially in unstructured activities, helps kids develop physically and emotionally. Written by Danae Lund PhD, LP



1. Build physically healthier children.

Nowhere is better than the outdoors for running, jumping, throwing balls, catching, pulling things, lifting and carrying objects. All these actions require motor skills that improve with practice. Children playing outside get aerobic exercise and gain skills, such as pushing and pulling outdoor play equipment. Studies show children burn more calories outdoors, helping to prevent obesity and strengthen bones and muscles. Playing in the sun builds vitamin D in the body, which means stronger bones and less likelihood of chronic diseases. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, many children have vitamin D deficiencies.

2. Contribute to cognitive and social/emotional development.

Unstructured outdoor play helps kids learn to take turns, share and develop other positive behavioral skills. They are more likely to be inventive, explore and learn about the world around them and use their own abilities. While they invent and play games with siblings or friends, these interactions help improve communication, cooperation and organizational skills. Additionally, fresh air and free play reduce stress levels.



3. Improve sensory skills.

An optometry and vision science study showed children who play outside regularly have better distance vision than children who are always indoors. Preschoolers, in particular, learn new things through their senses. Think of a toddler's delight at seeing new animals (sight), stopping at a bed of fragrant flowers (smell and touch), watching the water form puddles for stomping (hearing and touch) or eating a parent-approved berry from a bush (taste). On the other hand, children glued to television and electronic devices use only two senses (hearing and sight). This can negatively affect development of perceptual abilities.

4. Increase attention spans.

Children who play outdoors regularly are more curious, self-directed and likely to stay with a task longer. Children who spend most of their time indoors with little exposure to activities requiring their own initiation and follow-through show less ability to initiate or participate in new activities. In fact, studies of children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) found that children with ADHD who spent significant time outdoors exhibited fewer symptoms.

5. Grow in happiness and immunity.

Outdoor light stimulates the pineal gland. This part of the brain is vital to keeping our immune system strong and making us feel happier. Spending time in nature is also associated with improving mood and happiness. An added bonus is that children who identify with nature are more likely to become adults who appreciate nature and want to protect the environment.



NAEYC

Playing outdoors has benefits for both young children and providers. It's a refreshing pause in the day's schedule—time set aside to look and

listen, explore and observe, move and let loose. Time spent outside can lead to better physical and mental health, improved sleep, and cognitive, social, and emotional gains for young children. Ensuring that outdoor play is an integral part of your child-care and education setting's daily schedule supports early learning across all domains and unleashes a whole lot of joy—for you and for children!

Take a look at your backyard play space and make sure it is safe, inviting and you have activities for the children. Do you have balls, jump ropes, a climber with slide, sand/water table? Remember any activity that you do indoors can be taken outdoors. Bring out the music, manipulatives, creative art supplies and dramatic play. As always make sure activities are age appropriate.

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Faith Bornoff, M.Ed.
Executive Director



Spring is just around the corner. It is a great time to revisit and refresh your knowledge of required transportation procedures. Remember, even a walking field trip has to be documented properly.

Anyone who provides drop-off or pick-up from school or field trips must be trained. This includes both the driver and second sweep person if your program is a Large Family Child Care Home. There are only two acceptable courses that you may take to meet this requirement. One option is the DCF Transportation Course and the other is through Early Learning Florida, as it's part of the required pre-service training for school readiness providers.

If you operate a Large Family Child Care Home that offers transportation, you must also have an approved vehicle alarm installed according to the manufacturer's instructions. The alarm shut-off switch must be located in such a way that the driver is able to view all of the seats in the vehicle when disarming the alarm. The alarm should be heard from 500 feet away when activated. Your Child Care Licensing Specialist will inspect all vehicle alarms upon their next visit to your program.

If you have any questions regarding transportation or vehicle alarms, please feel free to contact your Licensing Specialist, or call or office to speak with the specialist of the day at 727-507-4857.

Thank you for doing your part to ensure that the children attending your program have many safe and happy spring and summer field trip memories!

Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County NEWS FROM EPIDEMIOLOGY



Don't Invite Norovirus into Your Family Child Care Home by Rachel Ilic, MPH, CPH, CIC

Norovirus is a very contagious virus that causes diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, stomach pain, fever, headache, and body aches. People infected with norovirus can shed billions of particles while only a few can make someone ill. People of all ages can become infected, and outbreaks are usually more common in the winter months, with a peak seen around January¹. Shared spaces and high-touch surfaces make it easy for norovirus to spread in childcare and school settings.



Norovirus is spread by having direct contact with an infected person, consuming contaminated food or water, touching contaminated surfaces and then putting unwashed hands in your mouth. Norovirus infection can be prevented by:

- **Practice proper hand hygiene**, which includes washing hands after using the bathroom or changing a diaper and before eating, preparing, or handling any food.
- **Prepare and handle food correctly** by washing fruits and vegetables before preparing or eating them, cooking food to [adequate temperatures](#), and keeping sick children or adults away from the kitchen.
- **Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces** regularly using [products the Environmental Protection Agency has certified as effective against norovirus](#).



- **Do not prepare food for others while ill** and for at least two days after symptoms stop.



While there is no medicine to treat norovirus, those infected should drink plenty of fluids to help prevent dehydration. Symptoms of dehydration can include decrease in urination, dry mouth or throat, and feeling dizzy when you stand up.

Outbreaks of norovirus can occur in any setting, but some settings are more common than others including healthcare facilities, restaurants and catered events, schools, and on cruise ships. Genogroup II genotype 4 (GII.4) viruses have caused most outbreaks around the world. It is possible to be exposed to norovirus at any time during the year; however, most outbreaks in the United States occur from November to April¹. Prevent outbreaks in your center by encouraging good hand hygiene, keeping food safe, and disinfecting surfaces for a healthy, norovirus-free environment.

For more on norovirus, please visit [CDC Norovirus](#)

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Norovirus Trends and Outbreaks <https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/trends-outbreaks/burden-US.html>

Image: www.cdc.gov

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PinellasHealth.com

QUARTERLY NEWS!

**Child Care Licensing Program
Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County**



Zeno Recalls Infant Walkers Due to Fall and Entrapment Hazards (Recall Alert)



Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled infant walkers and contact Zeno via e-mail to receive a shipping label to return the infant walker free of charge. Upon receipt of the infant walker, consumers will be issued a full refund of the purchase price. Zeno is notifying all known purchasers directly.

E-mail: cs@zeno999.com

Valco Baby Recalls Snap Duo Trend Strollers Due to Fall Hazard

Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled strollers and contact Valco Baby to receive a free replacement front wheel assembly and instructions for replacement. Valco Baby is contacting all known purchasers directly.

Website: <http://www.valcobaby.com/recall>

Phone: (800) 610-7850



Esme Recalls Children's Sleepwear Due to Violation of Federal Flammability Standards and Burn Hazard



Website: <https://esmewear.com/pages/safety-information>

Phone: (833) 961-7011

Children's Nightgowns Recalled by AllMeInGeld Due to Violation of Federal Flammability Standards and Burn Hazard; Sold Exclusively on Amazon.com

E-mail: yong-yi.US@outlook.com



Stance Recalls Kids Crew Socks Due to Choking Hazard



The bells attached to the socks can detach, posing aspiration and choking hazards to young children.

Website: <http://www.stance.com/support/recall>

E-mail: info@stance.com

Phone: (888) 391-9020

Mushie & Co Recalls FRIGG Silicone Pacifiers Due to Choking Hazard

Mushie & Co toll free at 877-687-4431 ET Monday through Friday, email at productsafety@mushie.com, or online at www.mushie.com and click on "Product Recall" at the bottom of the page or at mushie.com/pages/recalls for more information.



Colony Brands Recalls Children's Wood Wagons Due to Violation of Federal Lead Paint Ban and Lead Poisoning Hazard (Recall Alert)



Colony Brands at 800-991-4442 between 8 a.m. to 12 a.m. CT, Monday through Friday, or email CallCenterProductQATeam@sccompanies.com or the applicable seller at customerservice@wards.com or customerservice@ginnys.com.

BFG North Carolina Recalls Chest of Drawers Due to Tip-Over and Entrapment Hazards; Sold Exclusively at Rooms To Go (Recall)

The recalled dressers are unstable if not anchored to the wall, posing tip-over and entrapment hazards that may result in death or serious injuries to children.

Rooms To Go toll-free at 855-688-0919 Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET, email at productcare@roomstogo.com, or online at www.riverstreetrecall.com or www.brazilfurnituregroup.com and click on Recalls on the top of the page for more information.

CPSC Consumer Information Hotline

**Contact us at this toll-free number if you have questions about a recall:
800-638-2772 (TTY 301-595-7054) Times: 8 am – 5:30 pm ET. Messages can be left anytime.
Call to get product safety and other agency information and to report unsafe products.
<https://www.cpsc.gov/>**

QUARTERLY NEWS!

Child Care Licensing Program
Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County

HOMES
SPRING



Creative Corner

Fun, educational activities kids LOVE

We are bending over backwards for YOGA at Hope Academy International! Our young scholars LOVE to show off their Yoga skills, even our 2 year old's.

Incorporating Yoga into our daily transitions, especially after outside time, has helped manage anxiety and improve the emotional regulation of the children that we serve here at Hope Academy International.

It wasn't easy at first because I had to get my team to buy into it. Once my staff realized the benefits of Yoga in young children, they were game to try.

SIMPLE YOGA BREATH EXERCISE

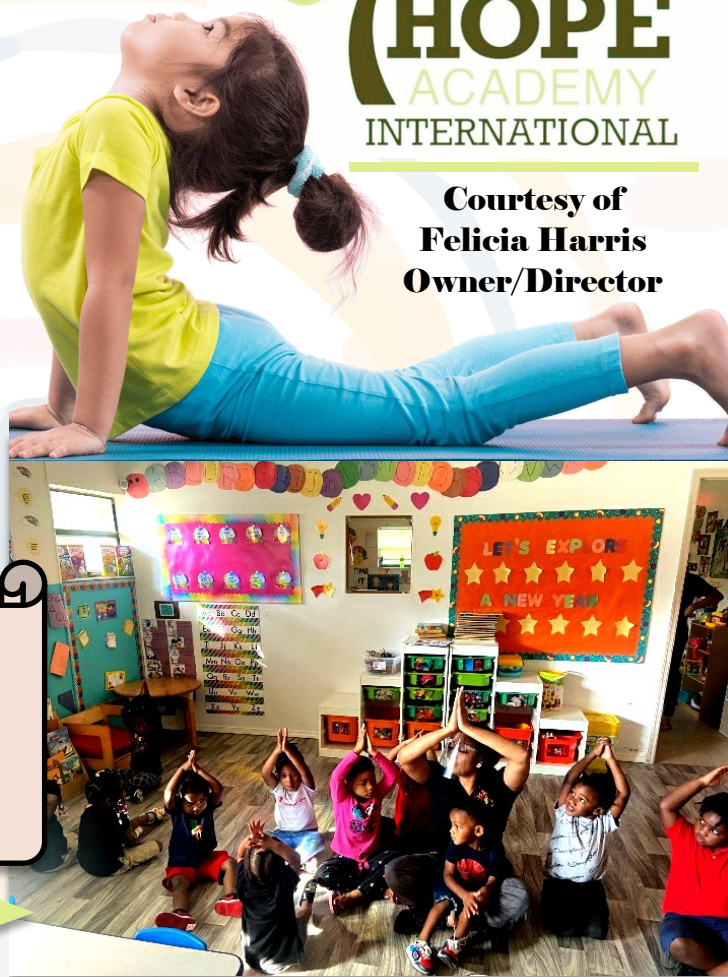
1. Take a deep breath in and hold it for a count of three.
2. Breathe out forcefully, like you're blowing out a candle.
3. Repeat for five cycles of breath.

YOGA GAMES

Mirror, Mirror

This game is a good warm-up exercise to increase focus.

- One person starts as the leader. The leader chooses a pose to do and shows it to the others.
- The other players copy the leader's pose as if they are looking into a mirror.
- Change the leader with each round of poses.



HOPE
ACADEMY
INTERNATIONAL

Courtesy of
Felicia Harris
Owner/Director

OTHER BENEFITS

- **Yoga boosts children's self-esteem.**
- **Yoga increases children's body awareness and mindfulness.**
- **Yoga enhances children's concentration and memory.**
- **Yoga develops children's strength and flexibility.**

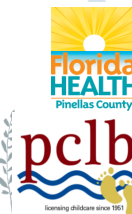
(Harvard Medical School, n.d.)

If you would like your Family Child Care Home to appear in a future Creative Corner, please email lisa.zacharia@flhealth.gov or call 727-507-4857.

QUARTERLY NEWS!

Child Care Licensing Program
Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County

HOMES
SPRING



Child Care Licensing Program

Florida Department of Health in Pinellas

8751 Ulmerton Road, Suite 2000

Largo, Florida 33771

727-507-4857 **pclb.org**

Mission

To protect and promote the health, safety, and mental development of children cared for in children's centers and family child care homes in Pinellas County.

Vision

Every child has access to quality child care and education in an environment that values diversity.

Values

Commitment
Integrity
Quality

Staff Spotlight



"I gained my childcare knowledge throughout high school and then worked at a child care center part-time just before going to college. I had so much fun working with the kids and building lesson plans."

Brandy Downing

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**Environmental Health Supervisor &
Ex-Officio Board Member**

I've worked in Environmental Health for over 15 years and I enjoy my job very much. Its ever-changing atmosphere keeps my career interesting and also challenging at times, but it's always rewarded simply by helping others.

I gained my childcare knowledge throughout high school and then worked at a child care center part-time just before going to college. I had so much fun working with the kids and building lesson plans. I studied Microbiology at the University of South Florida and to this day, I'm always learning something

new. Environmental Health became my passion when I volunteered for the Department of Health during my college years. With so many programs under Environmental Health, there's never a dull moment!

Family and friends can always find me hanging out in the backyard playing with the kids and our beagles or traveling to a new destination when we can. St Augustine was our last family trip and we had so much fun, my boys even learned without knowing it

I am very honored to be part of Pinellas County License Board as the Ex-Officio Board member and look forward to many years working with such a great group of people!