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Get Outside And Enjoy Some Simple Family Activities!!!

By Anne Zander, Family & Consumer Science Extension Agent, Boulder County

Think back to your childhood. What did you enjoy most when you played outdoors? Maybe you made messy mud pies, collected bugs, had a picnic, or played hide-and-seek. Outside play often loses out to television, the computer and video games. However, children who regularly play outside are more fit and leaner. They also have stronger immune systems. In addition, their play is more creative. Outdoor play should be supervised, but it doesn't have to be structured. It can be as simple as turning on the hose.

Ball Games

Playing with a ball can keep kids busy for hours. They can play kickball or catch. They can play basketball with a kid-size basketball hoop. Let them draw a grid on the driveway with sidewalk chalk so they can play four-square. If you have a part of the house away from windows, teach them how to play 7-Up, where they bounce the ball on the ground or the wall and perform a skill between catches, such as jumping, clapping hands or spinning.



Draw With Sidewalk Chalk

Sidewalk chalk is a favorite of children everywhere. Kids can use it to draw pictures on the driveway or practice their letters. Have them lie on the sidewalk while you use the chalk to trace their outlines. Then give the kids the chalk to color a life-size self-portrait.

Draw a hopscotch game for them. If you have kids of different ages, draw two. Let the younger ones practice jumping in the squares of one while the older kids play a more advanced hopscotch game in the other.



Water Play

Water, especially in the summer, can make playing outside even more enjoyable. Put the kids in their swimsuits and turn on the sprinklers in the yard. Or forget the swimsuits; they might have even more fun getting their clothes wet. Let the little ones water the garden while the older kids fill up some water balloons and play a game of catch or water tag. Set up the slip-and-slide, break out the squirt guns or fill up the wading pool. Always follow safety precautions in and around water.

Let's Talk:

It may be hard to get kids off the couch at first. You might even hear some grumbling and see some pouting, but once they get outside and moving they will soon be grinning from ear to ear. So, go ahead and turn off the TV and other electronic devices (including your cell phone) and head outside to play. Aim for 60 minutes of active play a day. At first you may need to show them how to play with mud, pebbles, clover, etc. Don't worry they are fast learners who might teach you a thing or two about having fun.

Recipe for Health:

Foil Dinner

This simple meal is a classic that's great for at home on the grill. The best part is that it requires no pots, no pans, and no mess!

Ingredients:

- meat (ground beef or turkey)
- potatoes
- carrots
- onions
- bell peppers
- butter, or olive oil
- salt and pepper or other seasonings



Directions:

1. Layer all the ingredients in the center of a piece of aluminum foil. Season to taste. Top with a little butter or olive oil.
2. Fold foil and secure tightly. Leave room for expansion.
3. Place packet on hot coals for approximately 20–30 minutes. Turn and rotate often.