

Healthy Children

October 2019 Parent Newsletter

Nurture with Nature

Reconnecting kids with nature has been shown to help children focus in school, boost a positive attitude and increase physical activity. Children are certainly losing touch with outdoors – a Canadian study shows that the number of kids who play outside at school decreases from 87% to 17% between grades 3 and 11. Seventy percent of youth spend an hour or less outdoors daily.

The effects of exposing and connecting children to nature are widespread and valuable. School grounds made greener by planting trees, building ponds and fostering gardens increases physical activity in elementary school children. Even having green space nearby has been shown to temper stressful life events in younger kids.

How you can help:

Start slow and make it a family goal to have at least 15 minutes of 'green time' a day, even if that just



means a walk together outside. Role modeling is essential to fostering a child's positive connection to nature.

Advocate for more time outside for your children at school, be it through extra gym classes outside or making outdoor learning a part of the other class lessons. Don't let the cold or snow stop you in Alberta! Many communities have free access to a variety of outdoor activities – Just make sure to bundle up!

Nurturing your child with nature is an easy way to improve their entire well-being.

➤ For more information and ideas, visit the **Children and Nature Network** at www.childrenandnature.org

Articles

Nurture with Nature

5 Tips on Talking About Sexual Health with Your Child

World Mental Health Day

October 10th is World Mental Health Day. You can use this day as an opportunity to check in with your child and see how they are doing. Asking every day questions can help such as: "How was your day?" or "What was the most challenging thing you did today?"

To learn more about mental health, visit <http://www.sickkidscmh.ca/ABC/Parent-Resource/Welcome>



5 Tips on Talking About Sexual Health with Your Child

Talking about sexual health topics like puberty, menstruation and relationships, will help your child to make healthy, informed decisions now and later on. Here are some tips for starting or having conversations about sexual health:

1. **Start young!** Teach young children the correct terms for their body parts. Talk about puberty before they are already experiencing it. The more you talk about it while they're growing up, the easier it will be to discuss more difficult topics later.
2. **Use teachable moments.** These moments can happen when you least expect them. You may hear lyrics to a song, watch TV together, or your child may tell you a story about someone in school. Ask your child's opinion, and use it as an opportunity to talk about sexual health and family values.
3. **Answer their questions as best as you can.** Find out what they already know and



- keep your response simple and age-appropriate. If your child asks a question and you are unsure how to respond, simply let your child know that you'll get back to them. Don't put it off – they might think that it's not okay to talk about it and will look for answers to their questions somewhere else.
4. **Make it a regular topic.** Think of sexual health education as an ongoing process. Shorter, frequent conversations are better than a big, one-off talk. Remember that healthy development, including sexual development, is a lifelong process.
5. **Aim for a friendly chat.** Try to see the talks as two-way discussions, not lectures. Ask what your child thinks and feels and be willing to listen. Aim to get a lively discussion going.