Today’s piece was prepared by Jennifer Moore, MD based on a New York Times article

[Writing Prescriptions to Play Outdoors](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/16/well/writing-prescriptions-to-play-outdoors.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fhealth).

This article discusses advantages of outdoor playtime and wilderness exposure for children, including physical activity, stress reduction, screen time avoidance, and stimulating creativity. The article explores the idea of “nature-deficit disorder” a term described by author and AAP speaker Richard Louv in his 2005 book, “Last Child in the Woods”. The author argues that exercise alone is too structured and doesn’t necessarily provide a break from busy demands of everyday life the way nature can. From a research standpoint, there is only preliminary data derived from research of adults, but the article links studies suggesting unstructured outside play can be beneficial for children with ADHD. One study found that children with ADHD in green play settings had milder symptoms than children who played in built outdoor and indoor settings.

Overall, the story is compelling and points out “common sense”. The [AAP has recommendations](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/1_MeetingAbstract/733) for physical activity and screen time avoidance, but nothing regarding “nature”. It seems there is a lack of concrete research proving the specific benefit of “nature” which admittedly seems difficult to study. A recent article in Pediatrics, “Schoolyards Support Healthy Bodies, Minds & Communities” of which Louv was an author, discusses how green schoolyards offer value to communities through improved “health outcomes, higher rates of family cohesion, and increased opportunities for outdoor play and restoration”. Another study, “Active Play Opportunities at Child Care” found that in 3-5 year olds in childcare centers, 88% of their time they were not given opportunities for active play. It also found that kids were more likely to be active when outdoors engaged in free play than teacher-led activities indoors, which hints at the idea that outdoors allows for more freedom and creativity for the mind and a space for physical activity.

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**RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES:**

[Recreational Activities](https://depts.washington.edu/dbpeds/Resources.html#section4_textarea47_heading) *A variety of resources for recreation regionally and beyond, as part of the Resources link to the UW Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics website, including activities for children with special needs.*

**RESOURCES FOR POLICY MAKERS:**

[Children & Nature Network](https://www.childrenandnature.org/) *Minnesota-based organization leading a global movement to increase equitable access to nature so that children and natural places can thrive. Provides evidence-based resources.*

[Could Exposure to Everyday Green Spaces Help Treat ADHD? Evidence from Children’s Play Settings](https://www.gwern.net/docs/nature/2011-taylor.pdf)

[The Effect of Physical Activity on Children with ADHD: A Quantitative Review of the Literature](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15377903.2016.1265622)

[Active Play Opportunities at Child Care](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2015/05/12/peds.2014-2750.full.pdf)

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!