

Dirt, mud, and bugs or inside and clean

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



Dirt, Mud, and Bugs or Inside and Clean Around the world today many children are inside playing video games, watching television, chatting online, or talking on the phone. Even though technology is useful and the use of electronics is crucial in society, children should play outside more than inside because of the many health benefits. Children who tend to play outside more have less health and development issues. Over the last two decades childhood obesity rates have more than double (National Wildlife Federation, 2011). Children tune out and stress out because they are missing a connection to the natural world. Parents are afraid their children will be abducted by strangers, which is one of the main reasons that children do not play outdoors unattended. Strangers exist in every town and city in the world, anytime someone acts out by abducting or harming a child, the result is tragic. Statistics show the sad and frightening story that children are more at risk from people they know. Busy schedules of parents do not permit supervised outdoor play; however, parental responsibility includes managing time to watch or play with his or her children when needed. Parents have the responsibility to limit their children to the amount of time allowed using electronics, and encouraging them to enjoy activities that connect them with nature. Doing so will help the child use his or her imagination in the real world, instead of playing in a virtual world. Many health benefits occur when a child plays outdoors more often than staying inside watching television or playing video games. Outdoor play increases fitness levels and helps build healthy active bodies; an important strategy in helping the children of America overcome the fast paced lazy lifestyle that Americans live in today. In the past 30 years, childhood obesity rates have more than tripled

(National Wildlife Federation, 2011). The prevalence of obesity among children ages six to eleven increased from 6.5% in 1980 to 19.6% in 2008 (National Wildlife Federation, 2011). During the same period, obesity among adolescents aged 12-19 increased from 5.0% to 18.1% (National Wildlife Federation, 2011). Children who stay cooped up inside during most of their free time tend to have lower levels of Vitamin D, vision problems, and higher rates of ADHD symptoms. Children who play outside tend to have increased levels of Vitamin D, which protects them from developing diabetes, heart disease, and bone problems. Children who play outside more or go to schools with environmental programs tend to score higher on standardized tests and have increased performance in critical thinking. The look in a child's eyes when he or she is outside enjoying themselves is one in a million. Children who take advantage of nature relieve stress because they can just have fun for a while and forget about a hurried lifestyle of school, homework, and chores that can lead to depression and anxiety when enough free time is not allowed. Increased time outdoors makes children nicer, enhances social interactions, creative thinking, and their value for the community that they live in. Children of today receive a raw deal; yes, they have unbelievable computers that help tremendously with school and homework, but they rarely are allowed to test their abilities outside. Parents today are so overprotective because they think their child or children will scrape his or her knee or break a bone; accidents can happen when children play and explore to new heights. Many parents are worried about their child being hurt or abducted while going off for the day to spend hours unsupervised swimming, climbing, or riding a bike; the type of activities that helps keep

children fit and strong. Yes, this can happen but what does sitting inside playing videogames, or watching television do for any child when not used judiciously, other than give him or her sore thumbs. No child should be left alone outside for hours at a time without being checked on; but what about inside like many parents do because he or she think it is safer. Out of every seven children ages 10 to 17, one has been sexually solicited online in some way (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2003). Many parents often wonder whether keeping their children inside is safer. Another statement people often use is, " It was safer when I was a child. " Statistics show that the crime rate has reduced drastically in the United States from 1975 to 2010. In 1975 the crime rate was 11, 292, 400; the highest crime rate in the last 35 years was recorded in 1991 of 14, 872, 900 and the lowest recorded year of the last 35 years being 2010 with 10, 329, 135 (Disaster Center, 2010). The reason most parents believe that America is more dangerous today than when they were children is the media. Nowadays there are 24-hour newsfeeds and 10 different Law & Order spinoff shows ever night playing on television, which terrify some parents into imagining disaster around every corner. Parents have the responsibility to make sure their children are not spending too much time playing inside with electronics, instead of spending an adequate amount of time outside playing. A Kaiser Family Foundation Study estimates that children between the ages of eight and eighteen spend an average of six and a half hours a day playing with some type of electronic device indoors (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2003). " The amount of homework children have compared to 20 years ago prevents them from having time to participate in outdoor activities" (Personal communication, December 30,

2011). Parents who allow their children to watch television and have televisions in their room also need to encourage their children to read and play outside. Parents with busy schedules need to have excellent time management skills, and creative minds to adjust their schedules to include planned activities inside and outside to spend time with children; and not just sit them in front of a television or computer to use as an electronic babysitter so they do not have to pay attention to what their child is doing. Media is being targeted at infants, toddlers, and children in today's society; it is critical that parents learn more about the impact it has on child development. Living in the electronic age of television, computers, and video games, children have a strong interest in the new technology. It is not uncommon, for a child to prefer playing with electronic devices inside instead of playing outdoors where he or she can develop his or her imagination and stay fit. Computers and technology are not necessarily bad but children need to have the desire to play outside and explore new places to help build the strong and healthy future leaders for society. Playing outside can be dangerous, but life is risky, and sitting a child down in front of a computer or turning on a movie as an electronic babysitter is just as unsafe or more. Children play differently when they are alone then when parents are hovering over their every move like a helicopter. When taking children to the park parents should keep a distant eye on them and watch as their child explores and try's new things. Parents have the duty of helping their children make the right choices; to stay healthy, keep them safe; but letting them be their own person at the same time; and enforcing rules on the quantity and quality of time spent playing games and watching movies

to help teach boundaries of life's rules and lessons. Children should get outdoors and explore to rediscover the joys of childhood and teach them new things down in the dirt and mud with the bugs. References Crystal Apsley. (December 30, 2011) personal communication Disaster Center. (2010). United States Crime Rates 1960-2010. Retrieved from <http://www.disastercenter.com> Kaiser Family Foundation. (2003, October). New study finds children aged zero to six spend as much time with TV, Computers and Video Games as playing outside. Retrieved from <http://www.kff.org> Limmer, D., & O'Keefe, M. F. (2009). Emergency Care (11th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. National Wildlife Federation. (2011, December). Health Benefits. Retrieved from <http://www.nwf.org> Web MD. (2007, August). Kids Playing Video Games vs. Kids Playing Stickball. Retrieved from <http://www.webmd.com>