

News Notes To Parents

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service of Wells County

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Getting Outdoors: Family Fun & Health

Spending time outdoors offers countless benefits for individuals and families. Whether in your own backyard, local parks, or expansive state parks, outdoor spaces provide the perfect environment for fun, exercise, and connection with nature.

Outdoor Areas: Backyard, Parks, and State Parks

Your own backyard is a simple way to enjoy the outdoors, offering a private space for relaxation and activities. Local parks and state parks provide a range of amenities, including playgrounds, picnic areas, and walking paths, ideal for outdoor fun.

The Benefits of Getting Outdoors

Physical Benefits

Outdoor activities improve physical health by encouraging movement. Walking, hiking, or playing sports helps build fitness, supports motor development, and promotes overall well-being. Sunlight exposure is essential for vitamin D production, supporting bone health. Outdoor play can also reduce obesity by fostering an active lifestyle.

Mental Benefits

Nature has powerful mental health benefits. Spending time outdoors can improve focus, reduce stress, and ease symptoms of depression and anxiety. It also helps with impulse control, particularly in children, allowing them to manage their emotions and behaviors more effectively.

Social Benefits

Outdoor spaces encourage social interaction, whether through team sports, games, or simply spending time with loved ones. These activities foster sharing, teamwork, and a sense of community, which are essential for building strong relationships.

Creativity Benefits

Being outdoors also nurtures creativity. Nature stimulates the imagination, making it the perfect environment for storytelling, art, and problem-solving. Time in nature can boost self-confidence, especially as individuals challenge themselves in physical activities.

Ideas for Outdoor Activities

There are endless ways to enjoy the outdoors. You can press flowers, organize a scavenger hunt, or hold a story

time session outside. These activities not only encourage creativity but also provide opportunities for learning, bonding, and having fun in nature.



How to Pack for a Hike or Day Outside

If you're planning a hike or spending a full day outdoors, it's important to come prepared. Here's a quick list of essentials to bring:

- **Hydration:** Staying hydrated helps you stay alert, cool, and prevents fatigue and headaches.
- **Nutrition:** Pack easy snacks like nuts, trail mix, granola bars, and applesauce pouches. Always take your trash with you.
- **First Aid Kit:** A basic first aid kit should include band-aids, gauze, a cold compress, tweezers, antiseptic pads, and antibiotic ointment.
- **Miscellaneous Items:** Don't forget bathroom essentials, hand sanitizer, sunscreen, bug spray, a portable charger, and an inhaler if needed.

In conclusion, time spent outdoors benefits physical, mental, social, and creative health. With access to local parks, state parks, and green spaces, everyone can enjoy the outdoors. So, pack your essentials and step outside to enjoy all that nature has to offer!

Sources:

CDC: *Benefits of Physical Activity*

Mayo Clinic: *The mental health benefits of nature: Spending time outdoors to refresh your mind*

Healthy Eating on the Go

Introduce your family to the idea of GO, SLOW, and WHOA foods to help them eat healthier

Today's families are more on the go than ever, spending many hours each week in the car, making it seem hard to make time for your family to eat healthy, nutritious foods. Increased time spent in the car has led many families to eat on the go. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 48 percent of the money spent on food in this country pays for meals eaten away from the home.

During hectic days, families need energy to keep them going, but they often end up choosing more convenient foods that are high in fat, added sugar and calories.

This year, you can introduce your family to the idea of GO, SLOW and WHOA foods to help them eat healthier. GO foods are low in fat, sugar and calories and are "nutrient dense" (rich in vitamins and other nutrients). Try to avoid



SLOW and WHOA foods that are higher in fat, added sugar and calories and that often, offer fewer nutrients. Whether you're off to a Saturday away game or driving your children to their weekly activities, use these tips for healthier eating:

- **Pack GO foods ahead of time.** If you have a busy day with your family planned including time in the car pack healthy snacks in a small cooler or tote bag before you leave. Consider water, fresh fruit or veggies, low-fat cheese sticks, whole-grain crackers or a low-sugar cereal portioned into baggies.
- **Make healthy choices at fast-food restaurants.** Sometimes, when you are traveling by car, fast food is the only option. Try making healthier choices such as sandwiches without cheese, salads with low-fat or fat-free dressing, replacing French fries with sliced fruit, and swapping fried meats for grilled options.
- **Read the labels.** Stopping at convenience stores for a snack can easily lead to unhealthy choices. Looking at the nutrition label can help you and your children make the best choice. Pick snacks or beverages that are low in calories and added sugar—some stores stock fat-free or low-fat yogurt, fruit or individually portioned trail mix. Try to remember that some prepackaged foods may look like a single serving but actually contain multiple servings.

Source: www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Easy Chili Popcorn

Try this healthy and delicious popcorn next time you crave a savory snack or have family movie night at home.

Ingredients

4 cups air-popped popcorn
1 tablespoon melted margarine or butter
1 teaspoon chili powder
Dash garlic powder

Directions

Before you begin: Wash your hands.

1. Mix popcorn and margarine butter in a bowl.
2. Mix seasonings thoroughly sprinkle over popcorn.
3. Mix well.
4. Serve immediately.



Source: eatright.org

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