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# Newsletter

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## Cold Weather Outdoor Play Boosts Immune System!

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Cold weather, outdoor play- It's not only for children, but adults too!

Think layers – adults and children alike! Adults should wear layers of lightweight clothing to stay warm. Don't forget gloves and a hat! Because children's bodies can lose heat faster, young children and babies should be dressed in one more layer than an adult. Make sure their head and neck are covered as well as a warm pair of gloves.

Winter fresh air is good for everyone!

Outdoor winter play has long been blamed for colds and the flu. Our parents told us to "bundle up or you'll catch a cold," and their parents probably told them the same thing. But winter play gets a bad rap. Although going outside unprepared for the elements is unwise, viruses that are spread by other human beings and cause colds and the flu are indoors.

The indoor circulation of germs and bacteria is much more harmful to your child than playing outside. There are plenty of excellent references for winter safety tips, such as [this article by the American Academy of Pediatrics](#) that explains proper clothing, winter health and more. With the right preparation and understanding of winter weather, your child can have as much fun in the cold as he or she does in the sun!

### Here are Four Benefits of Outdoor Winter Play

#### Breathe fresh air

It's no secret that most parents blame winter air as the cause for colds and the flu. Although the viruses that cause flu and colds are more common in the winter months, the circulated air in closed environments is the main cause of your child getting sick. All of the bacteria, dirt, dander, and other germs simply get recycled through the air vents over and over. The more time you spend inside, the more you are exposed. Nothing is more refreshing than that first deep breath of cold, winter air before starting hours of fun with outdoor play. In fresh, outdoor air, children do not have to rebreathe the germs of the group, and the chance for spreading infection is reduced.

#### Strengthen immune system

Playing outside allows your child an escape from indoor germs and bacteria. This will not only be good for the healthy bunch; the sick kids benefit from the fresh air as well. Just make sure they are properly bundled up and moving around to capture and generate warmth. Being outside more often also allows your child to develop a stronger autoimmune system and a resistance to allergies. Studies have shown that children in rural areas or those who are active outside have the best overall health.

### Engage in physical exercise

Just because it's cold outside doesn't mean your children have lost their energy or desire to play. In fact, the California Childcare Health Program states outdoor winter play "gives children an opportunity for a change of environment, a balance in play and routine, and large muscle activities (gross-motor development)." You must remember your child is still growing during these months, and prolonged sessions of inactivity are not conducive to their muscular development. Physical activity gives your immune system a power surge for a full 24 hours. A stronger immune system leads to less illness and less use of antibiotics.

### Stimulate the imagination

The winter also offers a variety of ways to stimulate your imagination through play. Does your child like to build things? Build a snow fort in the backyard with tunnels and a home base. Do you have access to a park? Go for a wildlife hike and look for birds and other woodland creatures. With all of the technological advancements of the past decade, many children are using their imaginations less and less. Something as simple as building a silly snowman utilizes problem solving and imaginative skills they would not be using while sitting on the couch.

**Remember:**  
**Hand washing is the single most effective way to reduce illness!**



### **Kids' Section:**

#### **Making a Snow Volcano**

What do you need?

- Empty water bottle
- 2 spoonfuls of baking soda
- 1 spoonful dish soap
- A few drops of food coloring (red makes it look like lava)
- 1 ounce of vinegar

Next steps:

- Make a volcano in the snow with hole in the center to hold the water bottle.
- Add everything except the vinegar to the water bottle.
- Add the vinegar and watch the eruption!

Tip: If it doesn't work so well, add a bit more dish soap and vinegar.

Why is this science?

Vinegar (an acid) and baking soda (an alkali) react together to neutralize each other. This reaction releases carbon dioxide, a gas which is the bubbles you see, these bubbles make the dish soap bubble up to give the reaction.



Science experiment  
and photo courtesy of  
Science-Sparks.com

If you have any ideas or would like more information, please contact us. To unsubscribe, email [knowwhentosayno@pa.gov](mailto:knowwhentosayno@pa.gov).



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