



Winter Outdoor Play

Prepared by the Health Consultant Team at Child Care Aware® of North Dakota

Playing outside every day is important for children's health and development. Children cannot get sick by going outside. Going outside actually can keep children healthier.

Why Outdoor Play is Important

Germs and illnesses can pass easily from one person to another when people spend a long periods of time together indoors. Children do not have to re-breathe the germs of the group when they are out in fresh, outdoor air. Therefore, the chance of spreading infection is significantly reduced.

The National Health & Safety Standards for Child Care recommend that child care providers take children outside at least once every day, as long as the weather is not severe. If a parent requests that their child not go outside, without a written explanation from the child's physician, the child should not be in child care. One child should not affect the planned activities for all of the children in care. Even on days when it may be too cold to play for an extended period of time, a short walk can be beneficial. Staff and children alike feel rejuvenated when outdoor play is part of the daily routine.

Dressing for Outdoor Play

Children need to be dressed appropriately to play outdoors safely. Parents should make sure their children have the following winter clothing with them every day so they can play outdoors during cold weather:

- Hat (as much as 50% of a person's body heat can escape from his/her head)
- Mittens/gloves (mittens keep hands warmer)
- Boots
- Winter coat
- Snow pants

Hats, mittens, and boots are especially important because ears, fingers, and toes are the parts of a child's body that most easily become frostbitten. Scarves and hoods with strings are not recommended because they have caused strangulation and other serious injuries on the playground.