



Why being outdoors matters to babies and toddlers

It's difficult to make bold claims about the benefits to babies and toddlers being outside and in nature because there's been so little research conducted. However, here are some of the benefits we've found:

Child health

Children's immune systems can be enhanced through contact with soil (Robinson and Barrable, 2023). Spending time outdoors can also decrease the risk of developing myopia (nearsightedness) (Huang et al., 2021)

Infants have been found to sleep longer outdoors than indoors, which may have beneficial impacts on their health (Tourula et al., 2010). Spending time in outdoor light in the afternoons can also help them sleep through the night (Harrison, 2004).

Sleeping,
resting and
being quiet

Sensory engagement

The natural environment supports multisensory engagement opportunities which the indoor environment is unable to offer yet which impacts greatly on healthy development (Hall et al., 2014).

Nature offers opportunities to encounter features such as uneven surfaces, slopes and stepping stones and to develop their ability to take supported risk (Kleppe, 2018; Murray and Williams, 2020).

Risk-taking

Early language development

The multi-sensory outdoor space may change very young children's speaking and listening practices and support their early language development (Hackett, MacLure and McMahon, 2021).

Enclosed outdoor spaces can help the youngest children feel emotionally and physically safe outdoors and support social connection (Hall et al., 2014; Moser and Martinsen, 2010; Hackett et al., 2021).

Social
connection

Moving freely and supporting physical development

Having opportunities to be outside and explore natural features increases babies' and toddlers' physical activity (Gubbels et al., 2018; Morrissey et al., 2015; Ng et al., 2020; Dinkel et al., 2019).

Reference List for *Why being outdoors matters to babies and toddlers*

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