

Unstructured Play for Child Development

Between school closures and home offices, many children and their parents are trying to develop new schedules to manage the COVID-19 challenges. While we may miss the structure of school and extra-curricular activities, let's celebrate the benefits of unstructured play. A 2018 report by the American Academy of Pediatrics underscores this, and lists some great benefits that come from unstructured play:

- Fosters cognitive development like problem solving and decision making
- Boosts physical development
- Boosts social and emotional development by teaching the importance of taking turns, negotiating, and dealing with negative emotions
- Improves creativity and imagination

With all these great benefits, it's clear that unstructured play is important, but what does unstructured play look like? Some examples could be:

- Building a fort
- Climbing trees
- Splashing in puddles
- Playing hide and seek
- Playing tag

Consider moving unstructured play time outdoors to take it up another level. Being outside has great benefits:

- Kids tend to move more outdoors
- Areas with natural spaces and features like trees, streams and rocks teach kids to explore and take appropriate risk

Celebrate this time away from the structured busy lifestyles we so often lead. Be creative and enjoy the benefits of unstructured play.

Source; helpmegrowmn.org
cbc.ca/parents

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/3/e20182058>