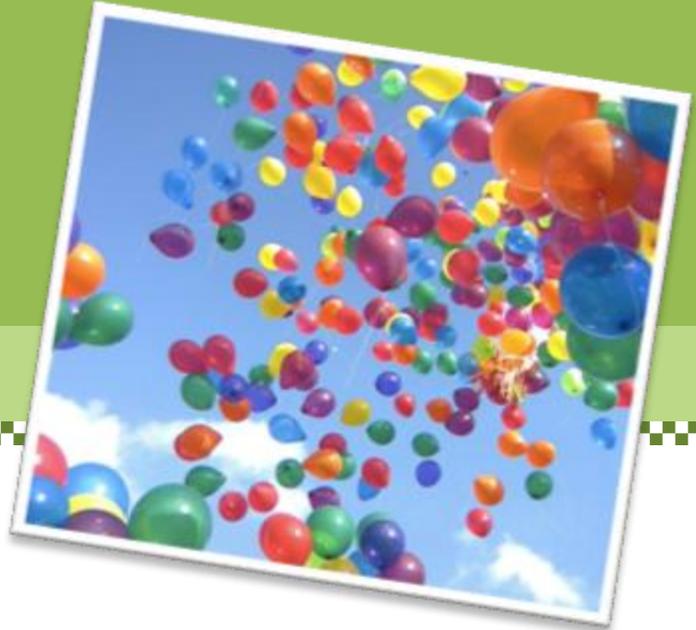


Play is serious business

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With the changing lifestyles of people in urban areas and the changes in the urban landscape itself, children are playing less and less in parks or outside their homes, preferring to spend their time in front of the television sets or computer monitors. There is an alarming trend of increasing number of overweight and obese children, due to a combination of reasons, most important of which is lack of exercise and play. Play is many a time considered a time-wasting activity, and its benefits are not commonly well understood.





OUTDOOR PLAY

- **Play helps children develop physical abilities – gross and fine motor skills**
- **Helps children develop intellectually**
- **Prevents obesity and improves health**

The benefits of unstructured and free play in the development of a child are enormous. Play may be outdoor or indoor. Playground activities provide for a large variety of muscular movements. Common outdoor activities are running, chasing, jumping, climbing trees and ladders, sliding down, playing on swings and see saws, cycling and ball games of throwing and catching. These activities encourage physical and motor abilities. It is through these play activities that children get an opportunity to exercise their growing muscles, strengthen them, develop coordination, endurance and flexibility and thus

refine gross and fine motor skills.

Outdoor play also helps in developing balance, visual and spatial perception and coordination of various muscles to produce smooth movements. Consider children playing on a slide, swing or seesaw in a playground. As they repeat these activities over and over again, they're practicing and perfecting various

movements, becoming better synchronized, more coordinated and their physical development is fostered.

We need to

1. **Take children to park to play**

2. **Provide opportunities for both indoor and**

outdoor play

3. **Provide age appropriate activities, materials and games**



4. **Use household objects and inexpensive materials to help children play.**

5. **Use different materials for creativity and**

INDOOR PLAY



- **Play helps children**
- **Grow emotionally – helps them feel different feelings and cope with them**
- **Build self-esteem and self-confidence**
- **Create friendship and bonding**

Now consider an indoor play activity like stringing beads to make a necklace. Here the child is exercising the small muscles of the hand and fingers, practicing eye-hand coordination and fine motor development and dexterity of movements. The child may then go on and wear the necklace, pretend to be a princess, dance around or give it to a younger sibling to play with. She is not only exercising her fine motor movements, she is also being creative, imaginative and practicing social skills. This improves her self-confidence and self esteem.

Games offer children opportunities of interacting with other children, builds their language and social skills. When a group of children are playing on the slide, each one has to await his or her turn. When a child falls down, other children may run to help him. When a differently-abled child plays in the park, it sensitizes the other children to his/her difficulties and builds empathy and compassion. Thus children learn from each other by observing, cooperating and being with other children.

The intellectual development of children is no less important

concentration. Children learn to analyze, deduce and anticipate and make decisions and choices.

Children often feel happiness, satisfaction and pride when they play well and complete a board game or win. They may feel anger, frustration and dejection too. This helps them to identify emotions and also express them.