

BE ACTIVE KIDS®

For Parents and Families *Volume 14, Spring 2009*



Welcome to *Be Active Kids*, an innovative, interactive nutrition, physical activity, and food safety curriculum for children ages four and five. Find out more information at www.beactivekids.org.

Have You Heard?

Did you know that daily exposure to natural settings has been associated with children's ability to focus and increased cognitive abilities?

This spring try these fun activities to turn **SCREEN** time into **GREEN** time!

- **Take a moon walk!** When the moon is full go outside and explore the mysterious wonders of the nighttime world! As you stroll under the stars pay attention to the sounds of the nocturnal creatures, observe the constellations of the universe, or go out there and catch some fireflies!



- **Rainy day? Go out and play!** Just because it's raining doesn't mean the little ones have to be cooped up inside. Keep those raincoats in mind but leave the umbrellas behind! Go outside and peek into a puddle, make a mud pie, or dance and twirl around in the rain! You can even go on a hunt for animal tracks and figure out where animals hide when it rains!



- **Family vacations.** Plan family vacations that encourage outdoor activities. Take a hiking trip to the mountains, a fishing trip to a nearby lake, or collect different types of seashells on your next trip to the ocean! If a vacation is not in the budget this year, be creative and go camping in your own backyard!

- **Provide plenty of free time play!** Organized sports and structured activities are great but kids need daily unstructured outdoor play time to explore and learn about their environment. Let them climb trees, build forts, dig holes, or just plain run around the background!

- **Trees and leaves!** Walk around outside with your child and have them compare the different types of trees. They will have fun comparing all the different leaves, flowers, bark, and buds. Allow them to press the leaves into a nature book or journal and use this as a guide to help them identify various trees.



- **Scavenger hunt!** Give your child a list of objects found in their outdoor environment and have them go hunt for them. Children will have fun searching for rocks, leaves, pinecones, different types of flowers, tree bark, and even some types of bugs!



Physical Activities for Be Active Kids

- **Think green!** It is important to teach kids to be environmentally conscious at an early age. Participating in nature clean-ups or trail maintenance with your kids will not only get them physically active but it will allow them to do something positive for their environment as well.
- **Nature bracelets.** Wrap a strip of tape around your child's wrist with the sticky side up. Take them for a walk outside and pick up small objects such as rose petals, fallen leaves and sand and see if they stick to the tape. Do this throughout the year and save the bracelets so your child can compare the seasons.
- **Mine for gold!** Spray some rocks with gold or silver spray paint so they resemble treasure. Then hide them in the backyard and let your child go on a treasure hunt!
- **Spring rolls!** What better way to enjoy the rejuvenation of the new spring season than to roll around in the grass! Tell your child to lay on their back with arms extended overhead and have them roll forward in a straight line. Kids love the dizzy feeling of this game and will also develop motor skills as they learn to control their bodies!

(Sources: www.takeachildoutside.org & www.funfamilyeducation.com)

The best way to thaw meat, poultry or seafood is in the refrigerator for 1-2 days before you cook it OR in the microwave. Remember, if you are using the microwave be sure to use the "defrost setting" and cook the meat right away!



Healthy Foods for Be Active Kids

Below are a few tips on how to make gardening more fun for your little ones!

- **Recycle those veggies!** Have your child rescue a few seeds from veggies like tomatoes, green beans, and peppers as they're eating them. In the spring, help them plant those seeds in their own garden as they learn an important lesson on the circle of life!
- **From root to tip!** Gardening can be slow and kids can be impatient. To give them a worm's eye view of all the action, have them plant their seeds in a clear plastic cup. They will love watching roots forming and the sprouts popping up!
- **Open a family farmers market!** Have them choose which veggies they want to sell, stake out a plot and help them plant their seeds. Once the veggies sprout, offer them farmers' market prices for their produce or have them sell to friends and family members!
- **Plant in pots!** Buy some cheap terracotta pots and let your kids decorate them and plant their seeds. Strawberries, cherry tomatoes and beans all grow easily in pots and for some reason kids prefer eating them from the plants rather than their plates!

(Sources: www.familyfun.go.com)

