



# Head out to keep colds out!

## Playing outside can actually keep your kids healthy during cold season

You may have grown up hearing, “don’t play out in the cold or you’ll get sick.” But research shows that playing outside in winter time might actually help prevent children from catching colds. Spending time outdoors not only decreases the opportunity to share germs, it can also help boost children’s immune response and keep them healthy.

### How do colds spread?

Colds are viruses that pass from person to person. The only way to get sick from a cold is to be exposed to the virus. There are three ways you can catch a cold:

- **Direct contact**, such as touching or holding hands with someone with the cold. If you have the virus, you will have germs in your nose, mouth, eyes, and likely on your hands. Touching someone who then touches their nose, mouth, or eyes can give them the virus.
- **Indirect contact**, like when a person who has the virus has touched a toy or a doorknob. Some germs, such as the cold, can stay on surfaces for hours!
- **Through the air** when a person coughs or sneezes. Droplets from the cough or sneeze can move through the air and reach another person’s nose or mouth.

## Is it easier to catch a cold outdoors?

No! In fact, colds and flus are more common in the fall and winter because people spend more time indoors and in close contact. Warm, dry rooms further help spread viruses.

Playing outdoors can help children develop motor skills and promote creativity, curiosity, and critical thinking. Research shows children who spend more time outdoors have higher self-esteem, improved grades, and better learning outcomes.

To prepare children for cold weather, dress them in layers of light, warm clothing. A good rule of thumb is to have one more layer of clothing than an adult might wear in the same conditions. Don't forget a windproof coat; warm, dry boots; gloves; a scarf; and a hat!

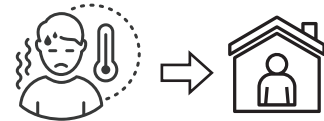
## What are the best ways to prevent colds?



The number one way to prevent colds is through handwashing. Teach children to wash their hands with soap and water often.



You can also teach children to cough or sneeze into the crook of their elbow, or a tissue. Make sure they throw the tissue away and then wash their hands!



Keep children home if they are sick. This will help keep other children from getting sick.

## For more information

**“Tips to Keep Kids Warm All Winter” — American Academy of Pediatrics**

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Winter-Safety.aspx>

**“Playing Outdoors in Winter Can Help Prevent Colds and Flu” — Richmond Mom**

<https://richmondmom.com/2012/01/07/playing-outdoors-in-winter-can-help-prevent-colds-and-flu/>

**Resources on the flu for schools and child care — Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (parent letters, toolkit for teaching children about the flu)**

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/freeresources/print/print-schools-childcare.htm>



**“Is it COVID-19 or is it Flu?” — Washington State Department of Health**

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/IsItCOVID-19-English.pdf>