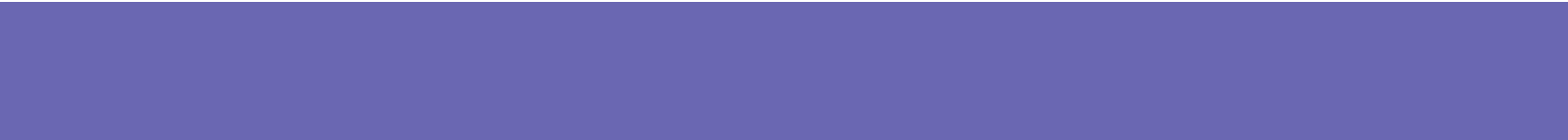




# Parks

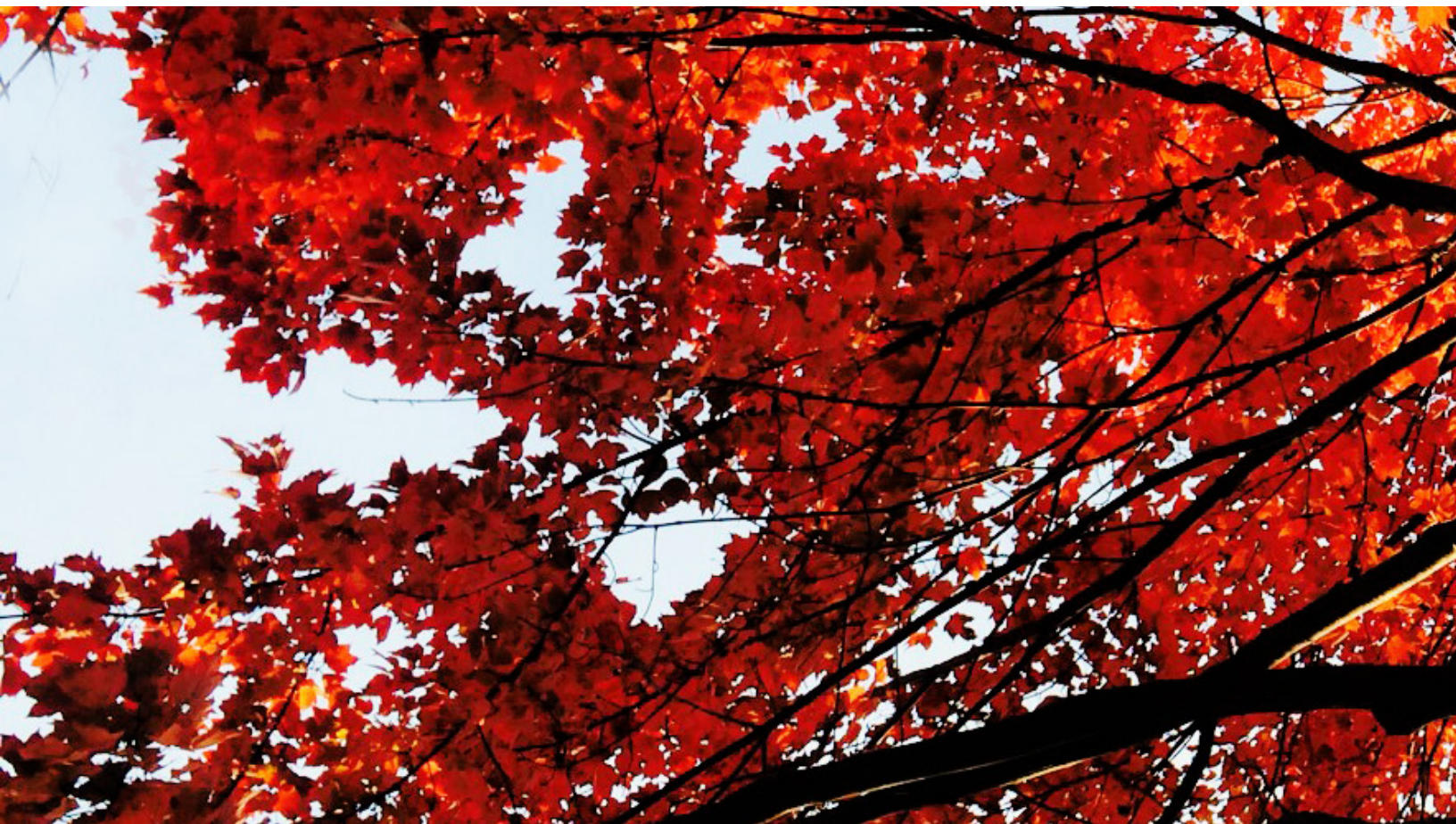
## Prescriber Toolkit

For School and Out-of-School Time





# Pittsburgh Parks Prescriber Toolkit



## **Authors**

Amber Blackwood; Kathryn Hunninen

## **Contributors**

Danielle Williams; Britnee Nwokeji

## **Reviewers**

Heather Sage; Mike Cornell; Anne Marie Kuchera; Jen Schnakenberg

## **Designer**

Gavin White

This toolkit was financed in part by a grant from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, the Environmental Stewardship Fund under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation.

Additional funding was provided by the WORDOUT Research Dissemination Challenge of the University of Pittsburgh Clinical & Translational Science Institute, through NIH Grant Number UL1TR001857.





# Table of Contents



Overview

4

Introductory Lessons

7

Activities

13

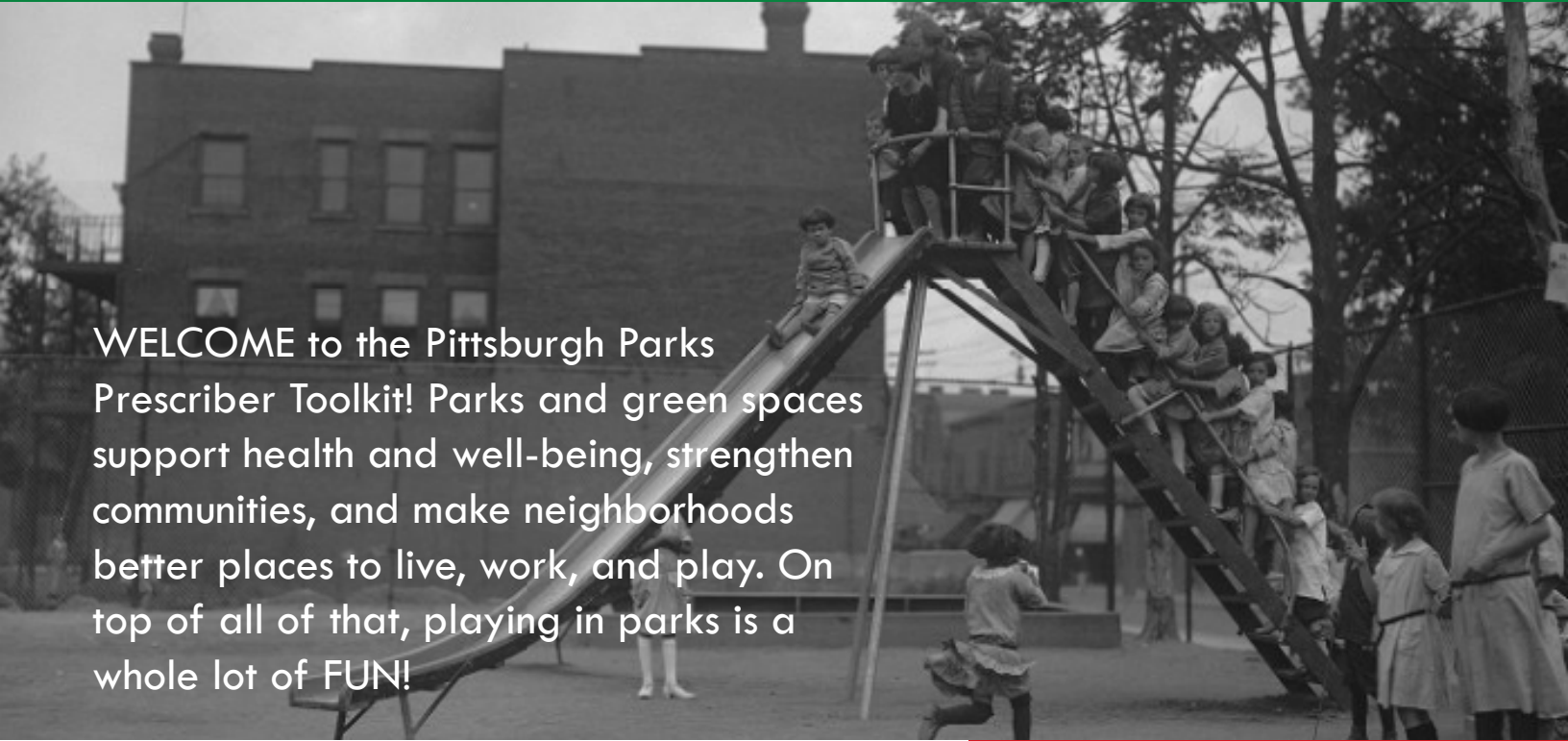
Materials

17

Resources

27

# Overview:



WELCOME to the Pittsburgh Parks Prescriber Toolkit! Parks and green spaces support health and well-being, strengthen communities, and make neighborhoods better places to live, work, and play. On top of all of that, playing in parks is a whole lot of FUN!

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC and others have teamed up to create Pittsburgh Parks Prescription, or Parks Rx, inviting children (and adults) in every neighborhood to explore and enjoy their local parks. Pittsburgh Parks Rx is inspired by a national movement to bridge the sectors of parks and health to improve human health through regular park use.

Too often we underestimate the impact that nature and play have on children’s health. In fact, studies show that one of the best ways to stay healthy is to simply step outside.

To help get you started, this toolkit provides a guide for presenting Parks Rx to kids, which will emphasize the benefits of physical activity and parks, and expose them to a variety of activities they can take advantage of both in and out of school. Parks Rx encourages you to adapt and tailor the activities to your specific needs, whether the setting is a nearby park or greenspace, schoolyard, or even indoors.

We hope that you will find this toolkit a valuable resource in helping you create a fun program that encourages kids to take advantage of local parks, leading to more active lifestyles.

## Did You Know?

Research shows that time spent outdoors provides the following benefits:

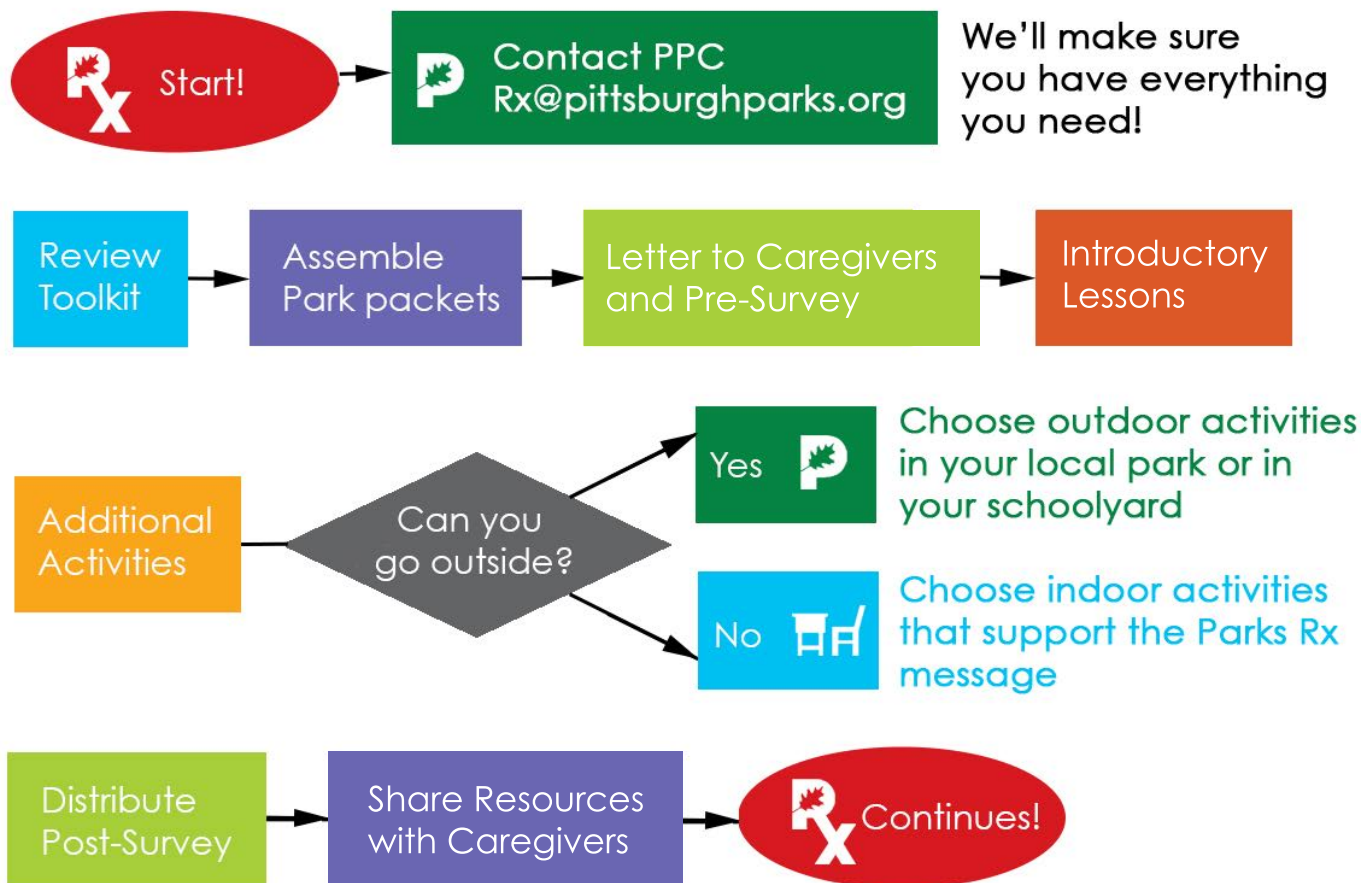
- Encourages physical activity
- Reduces anxiety
- Improves focus
- Supports learning
- Builds a sense of community
- Develops deeper interpersonal connections
- Fosters environmental stewardship and park investment

Rosen, Lawrence, M.D. (2015, Oct. 14). 7 Science-backed Reasons to Get Your Kids Outside. Retrieved from [www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)

*For more fun facts about nature, activity and health, browse this toolkit for “Did You Know?” facts or check out the research that backs them up on p. 31.*



# Process



## Evaluation

An important part of Parks Rx is ensuring its value. The information we learn from the surveys will help us make continuous improvements to Parks Rx.

- 1) Pre-survey: Distribute the survey (in the Materials section, p. 19) to caregivers prior to starting the Parks Rx program. Return surveys to the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.
- 2) Post-survey: Upon completion of the lessons, distribute the same survey and ask them to reassess. Return surveys to the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.







# Introductory Lessons



## Did You Know?

3 in 4 adults ages 30+ who play sports played outdoors as children.

[www.aspenprojectplay.org/the-facts](http://www.aspenprojectplay.org/the-facts)



# 1. Pittsburgh Parks Prescription



## Concepts

- Being physically active and spending time in nature are important for your health.
- Parks are places where you can exercise or be physically active in the outdoors.

## Learning Objectives

*By participating in this activity, students will:*

- Define what it means to be physically active.
- Discuss the mental and physical benefits of being active and spending time outdoors.
- Actively explore a park or schoolyard.

## Adaptations:

*If you can't take the class to a local park, try a schoolyard scavenger hunt—use the inside of the Parks Rx folder to conduct an outdoor scavenger hunt in the schoolyard.*

## Target Audience (Grade)

PreK; K-2; 3-5



## Setting

Classroom and park



## Length and Difficulty

45 Minutes - Light exercise



## Format

Discussion, scavenger hunt activity

## Materials

Pittsburgh Parks Prescription packets (one per student), Parks Rx page for your local park, pencils, outing supplies (see p. 20)

## Preparation

Contact Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and assemble custom park packets. Send parent letters and pre-surveys prior to first session. Review “Outing Supplies and Other Tips” (p. 20) and arrange for an outdoor field trip to the park.

## Introduction (5 min)

**SHARE** the Pittsburgh Parks Rx packet and explain its purpose. Pittsburgh Parks Rx is a “prescription” for fun, outdoor play! Give each kid a folder with:

- Park activities for any season
- Custom park sheet
- A list of all Pittsburgh Parks
- Other ideas for getting outside and having fun

Have them write their name, age, and favorite park activity on the inside of the folder.

**ASK** discussion questions:

- How many of you go to a park to play or exercise?
- What park do you go to and what do you do there?
- Who goes with you?
- How do you get there?
- Do you like going to the park? Why/Why not?

**SUMMARIZE:** Parks are a great place to be active and connect to the natural world, which helps us to be healthy. As a group, we are going to explore our local park together.

## Health Connection

- You are being physically active when your body is working harder than usual. When you are moving and you can feel your heart beat faster, you are being physically active.
- Being physically active is one way to stay healthy and fit. It helps you pay attention, be happy, strengthen your immune system, and avoid certain kinds of diseases.
- 60 minutes of physical activity each day is important for staying healthy.

## Activity (35 min)

**Scavenger Hunt:** Show the kids the park activity sheet and explain that the class is going to explore a nearby park.

- Prepare kids to go outside and walk to a park.
- Review rules for the hunt:
  - Stay within the established boundaries. Show boundaries.
  - Stay with your group.
  - Return to the teacher when you hear the signal. Demonstrate signal.
- Do this activity in pairs or small groups, or in larger adult-led groups, as appropriate for age/group size.
- Search for the items on the scavenger hunt sheet.
- Signal for groups to return after 10-15 min.

## Wrap-up (5 min)

- Review together:
    - What did you find from the page? What was hard to find?
    - Share favorite discoveries.
- Return to school or your site.



# 2. A Dose of Exercise and Nature



## Concepts

- Being physically active and spending time in nature are important for your health.
- There are many parks in Pittsburgh to explore.

## Learning Objectives

*By participating in this activity, students will:*

- Identify a park that is near the school and near their home.
- Observe nature and be physically active in a park or outdoor setting.
- Gain exposure to and an appreciation for the natural world.

## Adaptations:

*If you can't take the class to a local park, select Parks Rx activities from the folder and adapt them to your schoolyard.*

## Target Audience (Grade)

PreK; K-2; 3-5



## Setting

Classroom and park



## Length and Difficulty

45 Minutes - Light exercise



## Format

Discussion, scavenger hunt activity

## Materials

Pittsburgh Parks Prescription packets (one per student), pencils, outing supplies (see p. 20)

## Preparation

Arrange for an outdoor field trip to a park

## Introduction (5 min)

**REVIEW** Pittsburgh Parks Rx packet. Parks Rx is a “prescription” for fun, outdoor play! Packets include:

- Parks Rx Folder
- Park activities for any season
- Custom park sheet(s)
- A list of all Pittsburgh Parks
- Other ideas for getting outside and having fun

If applicable, **IDENTIFY** the park that you explored during the scavenger hunt. Have kids circle the name of that park on the list in the folder. If age appropriate, ask kids to identify other parks that they have visited, and circle those.

**EXPLAIN:** As a group, we are going to take another trip outside where we will observe the world around us, by looking and listening for nature clues in the park.

## Health Connection

- Being active outdoors is good for your body and your mind. Just a twenty minute walk outside can make you feel calm, focus your attention, and lead to creative thinking.
- Outdoor adventures can help strengthen bonds between family and friends.
- Studies suggest that kids who spend more time outdoors perform better in school, feel more connected to their community and have a stronger desire to care for it.

## Activity (35 min)

Utilize the Parks Rx packet to conduct a second outdoor experience in a nearby park or greenspace.

- Prepare students to go outside and walk to a park.
- Review rules:
  - Stay with the group and behind the leader.
- Use the nature hunt in the Parks Rx folder in small groups or as a class.
- On the way back to school or your site, slow down, look and listen carefully. What do you notice?

## Wrap-up (5 min)

Upon return:

- Share observations or favorite moments from your park outing. Have kids check off the activities in the folder that they did that day.
- If you are planning more park activities, collect Pittsburgh Parks Rx folders and let the group know that they will use them during their next park activity day.

**What's Next?** Conduct more park activities using ideas from the following pages or the materials provided with your folders. Send follow-up parent letters and post-surveys following Parks Rx implementation (Materials section, p.19)





# Activities



## Did You Know?

Just one physically active lesson creates a 21% decrease in a teacher's time managing behavior.

[www.activelivingresearch.org](http://www.activelivingresearch.org), see p. 32



# Activity Cards



## Keep exploring and playing **outside!**

Once you have introduced the Parks Rx packet to the children and visited a nearby park or greenspace, try some of the activities on the cards provided with this toolkit. Whether you want to encourage physical activity or provide opportunities to connect with nature, these activities can fit into a short visit to the schoolyard, while you're on a hike, or during a longer outing with multiple activities.

Visit [pittsburghparks.org/rx](https://pittsburghparks.org/rx) for more activity resources.

If you have any questions about the activities in the toolkit or would like more ideas, please contact [rx@pittsburghparks.org](mailto:rx@pittsburghparks.org)

# Activity Templates

The activities offered with this toolkit are just a sample of the fun and healthy things you can do outside. Maybe you have an idea for an engaging park activity - on the following page you will find two blank templates for you to create your own.

Cut out and copy the templates for each activity you'd like to record, or make up your own activity sheet to better serve the needs of the youth you work with.

Either way, we'd love to hear about your activity and, with your permission, share it with other park prescribers. Post your [#rxactivity](#) [@pittsburghparks](#) on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, or email [rx@pittsburghparks.org](mailto:rx@pittsburghparks.org)

**Target Audience:**

Description:

**Setting:**

**Length and Difficulty:**

**Format:**

**Materials:**



**Target Audience:**

Description:

**Setting:**

**Length and Difficulty:**

**Format:**

**Materials:**







# Materials



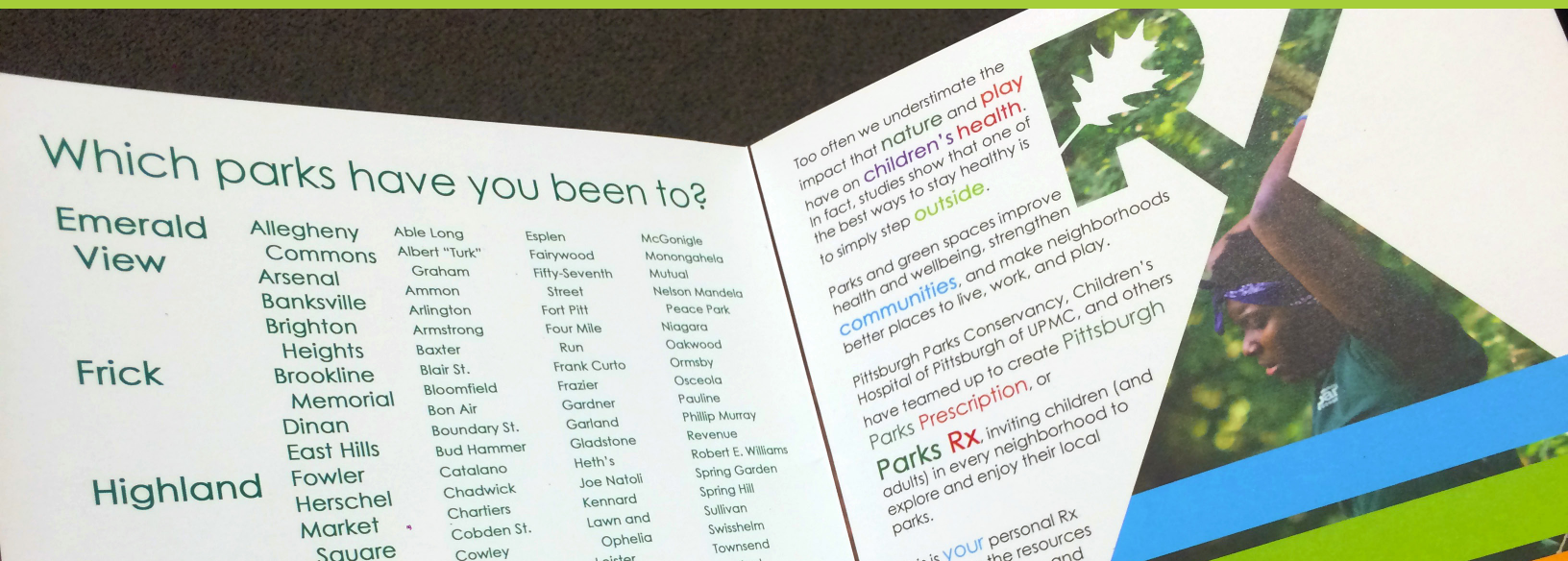
## Did You Know?

Learning in nature enhances critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving skills.

[www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org), see p. 31



# Materials Overview



## The following pages include:

- Letter to send home to parents (opposite)
- Parks Rx Survey
- List of suggested materials for park outings
- Reading recommendations
- Other useful tips and tools for getting kids out and active!

Don't forget to visit [pittsburghparks.org/rx](https://pittsburghparks.org/rx) for park pages, which offer directions, details, and specific activities for local parks, and even more Parks Rx resources!

## Letter to Parents/Guardians

The best way to instill the value of parks and outdoor activity in youth is to meet them where they are and engage those close to them. That's why we have included a draft letter for you to send home to parents/guardians that explains the program and its benefits. Simply fill in the specifics and send it home with them. Finally, ask each kid to share a favorite park story with their parents, starting a dialogue about parks, health, and fun!

Thank you!



Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

\_\_\_\_\_ is partnering with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy to encourage kids to take advantage of the parks and greenspaces in our area through the Pittsburgh Parks Prescription (Parks Rx) program! Studies show that one of the best ways to stay healthy is to simply step OUTSIDE. That's why Pittsburgh Parks Rx invites children (and adults) in every neighborhood to explore and enjoy local parks.

Visit [www.pittsburghparks.org/rx](http://www.pittsburghparks.org/rx) and you'll find park maps, activities, and other resources to make it easy for your family to get out and get healthy!

Students will have an opportunity to explore nearby outdoor spaces, visit a local park, and receive park information and activities to take home. To ensure the program's value to you, the Parks Conservancy would like to learn about how you and your children use parks! Please take a moment to complete the attached survey.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_



# Parks Rx Survey

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy would like to learn about how you use parks. Please complete the following:

What neighborhood do you live in? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you live near a park you can play in? Yes No

Which park(s) do you play in: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your favorite thing about going to the park? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your least favorite thing about going to the park? Choose all that apply.

Safety

Litter

Lack of maintenance

Lack of activities

Too far away

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

How often do you/your child(ren) go to a park?

Never go

Monthly

Weekly

Twice a week

3-4 times a week

More than 5 times each week

How do you travel there? Choose all that apply.

Walk

Bike

Car

Public transit

Other \_\_\_\_\_

What do you/your child(ren) do at the park? Choose all that apply.

Skate/Skateboard/Scooter

Bike

Swim

Playground

Climb tree

Sports/Games

Sled ride

Walk/Run

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you receive this survey? \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you!



# Outing Supplies and Other Tips

## Stuff to keep you SAFE

- First Aid Kit
- Emergency contact list for your class
- Water
- Wet naps or wipes
- Bag for trash (to keep NATURE safe!)

## Stuff to keep you COMFORTABLE

- Sit-upons
- Rain ponchos
- Comfortable, sturdy shoes
- Hat, sunscreen
- Bug repellent

## Stuff to help you EXPLORE

- **“Go bag”** or backpack for carrying and storing supplies - ideally with lots of pockets for organization
- Journals or folded paper and your favorite writing utensils (pens, pencils, crayons, markers, etc.)
- Magnifying glass
- Binoculars
- Bug box
- Various field guides - these can be print or digital (Audubon offers field guide apps for your phone)
- Map of the area you are visiting
- Any additional activity materials



Consider a waterproof journal like this one!

<http://www.riteintherain.com/>



Bug boxes are a great way to collect and observe specimens safely (But be sure to return them!)

## First Aid Kit Suggestions:

- Adhesive bandages
- Antibiotic ointment and/or antiseptic wipes or spray
- Sterile gauze (in rolls and pads)
- Hydrocortisone ointment
- Hand sanitizing gel
- Sunscreen (at least SPF 15)
- Cotton balls and swabs
- Disposable medical gloves
- Blunt tip scissors (to cut gauze)
- Tweezers
- Fine needle (for helping remove small splinters)
- Antihistamines
- Bug spray



If you don't have sit-upons already, you can use newspaper, or have students make their own!



# Play Safe!

## Stuff to AVOID - Poison Ivy

When visiting outdoor spaces, it is possible to be exposed to poison ivy or ticks, especially if you venture off of paved paths or trails. Familiarize yourself with how to limit exposure and what to do if you come in contact.

### POISON IVY

Poison Ivy is a vine that contains oil called urushiol (“yoo-ROO-shee-all”) which can cause many people to develop itchy rashes. The poison ivy leaves, the vine, and anything that comes in contact with them transport urushiol and can cause a rash:



Poison Ivy leaves:  
Always in groups of three leaves with  
an irregular margin.

*“Leaves of 3, let it be”*



Poison Ivy vine:  
Has many small red hairs, will climb  
up trees or creep along the ground.

*“Hairy vine, no friend of mine”*

If you are exposed to Poison Ivy:

1. Immediately wash the area with poison plant wash (Technu) or degreasing soap (such as dishwashing soap) and water.
2. Scrub under fingernails with a brush and soap.
3. Wash any clothes or objects that may have come in contact with poison ivy separately.
4. If you develop a reaction, apply wet compresses, calamine lotion, or hydrocortisone cream to the skin to reduce itching and blistering.

Symptoms of Poison Ivy Exposure:

- Red rash within a few days of contact
- Swelling
- Itching
- Possible bumps, patches, streaking or weeping blisters (blister fluid is not contagious)

Seek medical care if:

- The rash is on the face, especially near the eyes, nose, or mouth.
- You have a severe allergic reaction, such as swelling or difficulty breathing, or have had a severe reaction in the past.

## Stuff to AVOID - Ticks

Ticks are tiny parasitic mites that burrow under the skin of a host to feed. Ticks cannot fly or jump, they travel by walking up plants and hooking onto hosts with special hooks on their legs as they walk by. *If you do find a tick, do not panic; most ticks do not carry diseases and most tick bites do not cause serious health problems.*

How to prevent exposure:

1. Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirt if going into areas where you may brush against plants
2. Apply bug repellent
3. Check for ticks shortly after being outdoors
  - a. Do a quick check of all exposed skin (especially legs, arms, neck, head, and ears) immediately.
  - b. Provide information for parents to do a thorough check at home.

How to check for ticks—Tips for Parents:

It is important to scan your child's body for ticks after going outside during the spring and summer.



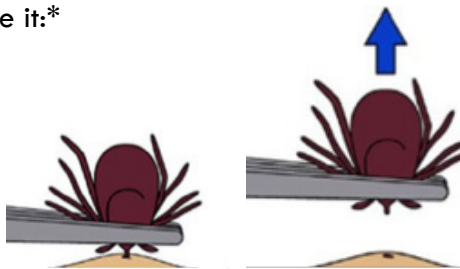
• larva    \* nymph    \* adult    \* engorged adult

1. Look at all parts of your child's body for small mites burrowed into their skin from their face down to their toes. It helps to use your finger to track where you are looking on your child's body.
2. Pay particular attention to the following areas: *under the arms, in and around the ears, inside belly button, back of the knees, in and around the hair, between the legs, around the waist.*

According to the Center for Disease Control ([www.cdc.gov/ticks](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks)), if you find a tick:

If the tick is still attached to the skin, remove it:\*

1. Using fine tipped tweezers, grasp the head of the tick close to the skin.
2. Firmly and steadily pull the tick straight up and out of the skin. Do not twist the tick or rock it from side to side while removing it
3. Put the tick in a sealed container or zip-locked bag and save it to show the doctor if necessary.
4. Wash your hands and the site of the bite with soap and water and swab the skin with alcohol.
5. Watch the site of the bite for signs of infection and see a medical professional if infection occurs.



A bull's eye shaped rash is a sign of Lyme's disease. Prompt medical attention is required if this appears.

*\*If you feel uncomfortable doing this, go to a medical professional.*

Seek medical care if:

- Part of the tick remains in the skin after attempted removal.
- A rash of any kind develops, a red-ringed bull's-eye rash is a symptom of Lyme Disease.
- The bite area looks infected (increasing redness, warmth, swelling, pain, or pus).
- Symptoms like fever, headache, fatigue, chills, stiff neck or back, or muscle or joint aches develop.



# EXPLORE



## Let learning happen naturally



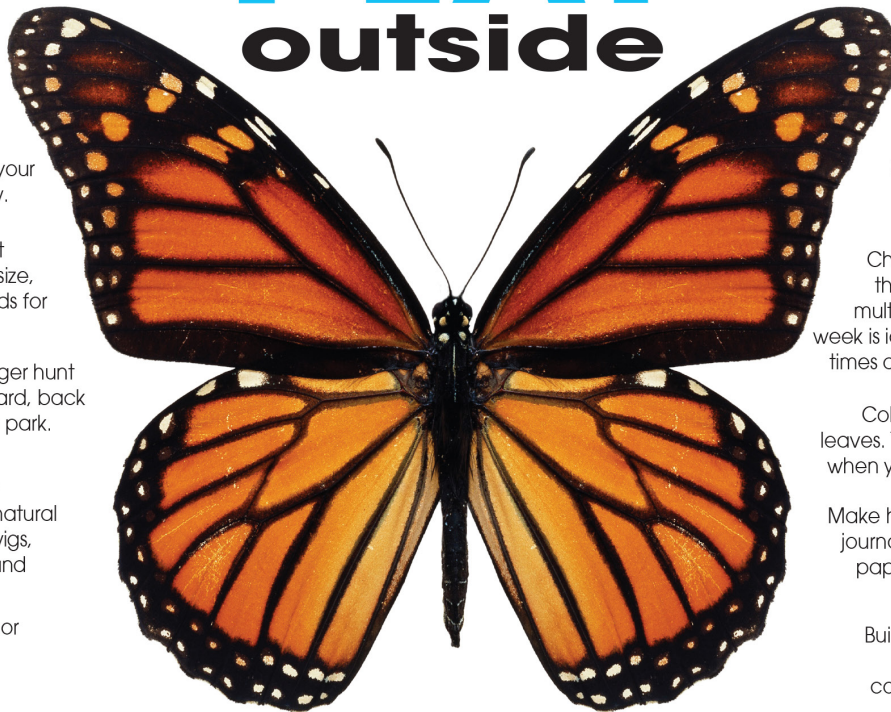
### 5 ways to make it easier to get your kids outside:

- 1** Have a set of tote bags loaded with sit-upons, rain ponchos, and magnifiers.
- 2** Make your own pack especially for outside days so you can grab and go. Keep it stocked with first aid kit, water, emergency contacts, etc.
- 3** Make sure kids are dressed for the weather and can get dirty. Being prepared helps kids learn and have more fun.
- 4** Scope out the site before outdoor time and set boundaries that you and all the kids can see and keep within.
- 5** Review the activity and rules indoors with your kids so when you are outside they can get right to work - and play!

### 5 things to do outside with younger kids

- 1** Put up a bird feeder outside your favorite window.
- 2** Collect and sort leaves (shape, size, color, ask the kids for other ideas...).
- 3** Make a scavenger hunt in your school yard, back yard, or favorite park.
- 4** Construct 'fairy houses' out of natural materials like twigs, fallen leaves, and seed pods.
- 5** Turn over rocks or logs and see what's hiding underneath.

## PLAY outside



### 5 things to do outside with older kids

- 1** Make maps of all kinds - sound map, treasure map, or aerial map.
- 2** Choose special spots that you can go visit multiple times. Once a week is ideal, but a couple times a year is great, too.
- 3** Collect and press tree leaves. Try to identify them when you go back inside.
- 4** Make homemade nature journals. Use waterproof paper so weather isn't an issue.
- 5** Build forts, make kites, experiment and construct with natural materials.

 [PittsburghParks.org](http://PittsburghParks.org)

# Reading Recommendations



All of the titles on this list can be borrowed through the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh system. For more suggestions, contact your local librarian!



**For Leaders:** Useful guides for our Park Prescribers and other caregivers

**Sharing Nature with Children** by *Joseph Cornell*  
-Tips for exploring nature with kids through group games and activities

**Nature with Children of All Ages** by *Edith A. Sisson*  
-Activities and adventures for exploring the world around us

**For Kids:** Fun stories about parks and nature for younger audiences

**Field Guides:** Field guides to help beginners learn to identify species in our parks

**My Dream Playground** by *Kate M. Becker*  
-A story about a girl who helps build a playground in her community

**The Children at the Playground** by *Tracey M. Cox*  
-A story about playing in the park, set to “The Wheels on the Bus”

**At the Park: A Mr. and Mrs. Green Adventure** by *Keith Baker*  
-Mr. and Mrs. Green Alligator can’t agree on what to do at the park—until they hear a familiar sound!

**Diary of a Worm** by *Doreen Cronin*  
-A cute fiction story about the day to day life of a worm

**Owl Babies** by *Martin Waddell*  
-A fun story about three owl babies!

**Forest Explorer** by *Nic Bishop*  
-Similar to a nature “iSpy” this book highlights some creatures you may find in the forest and then asks you to practice your observation skills to find them

**Backyard Birds (Peterson Field Guide for Young Naturalists)** by *Jonathan P. Latimer*  
-A great guide for the beginner birder! Includes information about birds’ habitat, food, and calls.

**Trees, Leaves, and Bark and Wildflowers, Blooms, and Blossoms** by *Diane Burns*  
-This guide is a great place to start learning about characteristics to help with plant identification.

**Whose Tracks are These?** By *James Nail*  
-Learn about forest animals preferred places to live, food, and how to identify their tracks!

**Urban Nature:** Titles about nature in urban settings, just like our parks

**Secret Place** by *Eve Bunting*  
-A narrative story about a child who finds nature hidden in the city!

**Take a City Nature Walk** by *Jane Kirkland*  
-Take this guide along with you and learn about nature you can find in the city







# Resources

## Did You Know?

Kids who play outside have better vision than those who play inside.

[www.care.com/c/stories/4178/5-health-benefits-of-playing-outside](http://www.care.com/c/stories/4178/5-health-benefits-of-playing-outside)



# Resources: Local Organizations



**Pittsburgh  
Parks  
Conservancy**

**[www.pittsburghparks.org](http://www.pittsburghparks.org)**

A nonprofit organization, the Parks Conservancy has worked closely with the City of Pittsburgh since 1998. The Parks Conservancy raises funds for park improvements, facilitates park planning processes, and offers a wide range of educational programs and other activities. Currently active in 22 parks, the Parks Conservancy has expanded into community and neighborhood parks throughout Pittsburgh, and is working hard to create fun and healthy resources for all of the city's parks!



**[www.chp.edu](http://www.chp.edu)**

Renowned for its outstanding clinical services, research programs and medical education, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC has helped establish the standards of excellence in pediatric care. CHP partners with Pittsburgh Public Schools and others through their Healthy Schools and Healthy Out of School Time (HOST) programs, and works with numerous organizations to improve the health and wellbeing of Pittsburgh youth.



**[www.pittsburghpa.gov/citiparks](http://www.pittsburghpa.gov/citiparks)**

Citiparks is Pittsburgh's Department of Parks & Recreation, responsible for park programming. From running the numerous recreation centers and healthy active living centers throughout the city, to providing innovative park opportunities like the roving art cart, Citiparks works hard to provide Pittsburgh residents with free, fun resources to get out and active. Explore their website to learn more about the amazing parks and events our city has to offer!



**www.afterschoolpgh.org**

Your place for everything after school. Allegheny Partners for Out-of-school Time works to connect parents and teachers with quality programs for their kids and students.

**www.aswp.org**

The Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania offers programs that connect people of all ages to birds and nature. The national organization also publishes excellent field guides.

**www.bikePGH.org**

With a focus on Advocacy, Education, and Community, Bike Pittsburgh is transforming our streets and communities into vibrant, healthy places by making them safe and accessible for people to bike and walk. Check out their website for all things biking, including events, news, and resources

**www.fitt.co/pittsburgh**

Fitt is an online magazine dedicated to sharing health resources with residents of Pittsburgh, from parks to visit, to advice about healthcare enrollment. A great way to stay up to date and, more importantly, stay Fitt!

**www.playfulpittsburgh.org**

The Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative is a group of committed individuals and organizations dedicated to advancing the importance of play in the lives of children, families and communities in the Pittsburgh region. Learn more about the member organizations and what they can offer you at the link above.

**www.ventureoutdoors.org**

Venture Outdoors provides gear, guidance and inspiration to make outdoor recreation part of people's lives. They have plenty of online resources available, and as a local organization, you can find them out and about and join in the fun, whether it's geocaching in our parks or kayaking on the three rivers.

**www.livewellallegheny.com**

Led by the Allegheny County Health Department, the Live Well Allegheny Campaign aims to improve the health and well-being of Allegheny County residents through collaboration among diverse stakeholders. They provide online resources for healthy eating, active living, and outdoor fun, as well as the opportunity for communities, schools, and businesses to gain "Live Well" status.

**www.phipps.conservatory.org/lets-move-pittsburgh**

Let's Move Pittsburgh — modeled after First Lady Michelle Obama's national Let's Move! campaign to raise awareness about the benefits of healthy foods, increased exercise and decreased screen time — is a program of Phipps Conservatory and a collaborative effort to improve the health of children in southwestern Pennsylvania. Let's Move Pittsburgh is proud to present 5-2-1-0, a movement to reinforce healthy lifestyle choices that benefit local kids and their families (adapted from Let's Go! www.lets-go.org). Check out their website for resources and upcoming events.



# Resources: National Organizations



[www.parkrx.org](http://www.parkrx.org)

The National ParkRx Initiative is a community of practice for agencies involved in park prescriptions programs at local, state, and national levels.



[www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org)

The Children & Nature Network hosts a wide variety of research and resources regarding their namesakes on this vast website. Explore and learn more about why and how to kids outside more often.



[www.commit2ten.org](http://www.commit2ten.org)

#Commit2Ten is a campaign of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation challenging the nation to add 10 more minutes of physical activity a day. This website is full of supportive research and resources to make that happen, for individuals, families, schools, afterschool programs, companies, and communities.



PLAYWORKS

[www.playworks.org](http://www.playworks.org)

Playworks is changing school culture by leveraging the power of safe, fun, and healthy play at school every day. On their website you can find countless tools for play, from a library of fun games to professional play coaches!



[www.activeschoolsasap.org/node/213](http://www.activeschoolsasap.org/node/213)

Active Schools Acceleration Project (ASAP) is increasing quality physical activity in America's schools by identifying innovative solutions pioneered by everyday people, and empowering new schools with the tools and resources to replicate proven models. The link above directs you to a page with great resources for in-school activities



[www.gonoodle.com](http://www.gonoodle.com)

Sign up (for free!) to gonoodle.com to find and use hundreds of videos aimed at getting kids everywhere active. These playful activities are designed to turn screen time into active time, and improve the health of your home or classroom.



***“Time in nature is not leisure time; it’s an essential investment in our children’s health.”***

Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*<sup>1</sup>

## Why Parks Rx?

Playing outside and connecting to nature are good for your body and your mind. It is well-known, with a large body of evidence to support it, that improved health can be attributed to regular physical activity. In addition, numerous studies show that being physically active in the outdoors and in connection with natural spaces provides added physical and mental health benefits.<sup>2</sup> Parks Rx provides a framework for teachers, parents, community leaders, and healthcare professionals to encourage kids to get outside.

**Did you know?** Children have lost 25% of playtime and 50% of unstructured outdoor activity over recent decades. They now spend only 1% of their free time outdoors.<sup>3</sup>

Given all of the health benefits of spending time outdoors, it is critically important for community leaders such as teachers and healthcare professionals to provide tools and encouragement to parents and children. Parents, friends, and family are the most influential to youth participation in outdoor activities.<sup>4</sup>

The following pages have additional sources for exploring and explaining the value of activity and nature to children’s (and adults’!) health and wellbeing:





# Research - Activity

Physical activity improves health and supports positive academic outcomes.

“After being in a physically active afterschool program for 9 months, memory tasks improved 16%.”<sup>13</sup>

Physical activity stimulates brain activity.<sup>11</sup>

“After 20 minutes of physical activity, students tested better in reading, spelling & math and were more likely to read above their grade level.”<sup>12</sup>

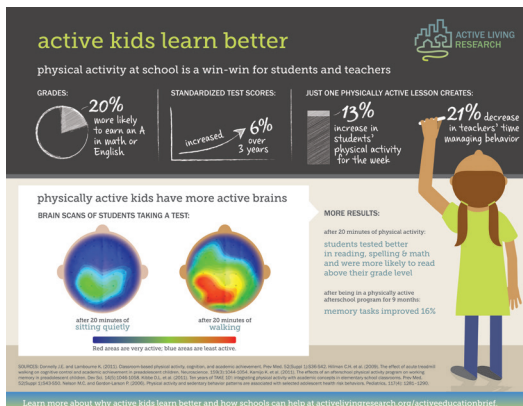
Physical inactivity is the underlying cause of<sup>14</sup>:

10.8%  
of all-cause  
mortality

6.7%  
of heart  
disease

8.3%  
of diabetes

Check out this infographic from Active Living Research for more on the value of activity in learning:



## SOURCES

1. Louv, Richard. (2005). Last Child in the Woods. Chapel Hill, NC; Algonquin Books.
2. Retrieved from: [www.neefusa.org/health](http://www.neefusa.org/health)
3. Hofferth, S. and Sandberg, J. 1999; University of Michigan Institute for Social Research.
4. Retrieved from: <https://www.neefusa.org/resource/children-and-nature-info-graphic>
5. Wolch et al. (2011). Childhood obesity and proximity to urban parks and recreational resources: A longitudinal cohort study. *Healthy Place*, 17(1), 207-214.
6. Cleland V, et al. *Int J Obesity* 2008; 32:1685-93; Burdette, H., et al. *Arch. of Ped. Adolesc. Med.*, 2004; 158(4): 353-357; Yamaguchi, M., Deguchi, M. and Miyazaki, Y. *J. Intern. Medical Res.* 2006; 34(2), 152-159
7. Nedovic & Morrissey (2013). Calm, active and focused: Children's responses to an organic outdoor learning environment. *Learn Environ Res*, 16(2), 281-295.
8. Lieberman & Hoody (1998). Closing the achievement gap: Using the environment as an integrating context for learning. *Results of a Nationwide Study*. San Diego: SEER.; Chawla (2015). Benefits of nature contact for children. *J Plan Lit*, 30(4), 433-452
9. Kaplan, S. *J. Environmental Psychology*. 1995; 15:169-182; Morita, E., et al. *Public Health*. 2007; 121(1):54-63; Yamaguchi, M., et al. *J. Int. Med. Res.* 2006; 34(2):152-9; Berman, M.G., J. Jonides and S. Kaplan. *Psychol. Sci.* 2008; 9(12):1207-12; Van den Berg, A.E. et al. *J. Environ. Psych.* 2003; 23 135-146
10. Taylor AF, Kuo FE, *J. Attention Disorder*. 2009; 12:402.
11. Hillman C.H. et al. (2009). The effect of acute treadmill walking on cognitive and academic achievement in preadolescent children. *Neuroscience*. 159(3):1044-1054.; Nelson M.C. and Gordon-Larson P. (2006). Physical activity and sedentary behavior patterns are associated with selected adolescent health risk behaviors. *Pediatrics*. 117(4):1281-1290.
12. Donnelly J.E. and Lambourne K. (2011). Classroom-based physical activity, cognition, and academic achievement. *Prev Med.* 52(Suppl 1):S36-S42.; Kibbe D.L. et al. (2011). Ten years of TAKE 10!: Integrating physical activity with academic concepts in elementary school classrooms. *Prev Med.* 52(Suppl 1):S43-S50.
13. Kamijo K. et al. (2011). The effects of an afterschool physical activity program on working memory in preadolescent children. *Dev Sci.* 14(5):1046-1058.
14. Lee IM, Shiroma EJ, Lobelo F, Puska P, Blair SN, Katzmarzyk PT. Effect of physical inactivity on major noncommunicable diseases worldwide: an analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy.; *Lancet*. Jul 21 2012; 380(9838):219-229.

[www.activelivingresearch.org/activeeducationbrief](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/activeeducationbrief)





Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, and others have teamed up to create Pittsburgh Parks Prescription, or Parks Rx, inviting kids (and adults) in every neighborhood to explore and enjoy their local parks.

As someone who interacts with youth on a regular basis, you can play a critical role in ensuring that our children grow up healthy, happy, and invested in our communities' parks. Use the resources and ideas in here, and collect more park materials, to make Pittsburgh parks the #1 place to learn, be active and have FUN!

For more parks and activities, visit [www.pittsburghparks.org/Rx](http://www.pittsburghparks.org/Rx)

