

Climate & Early Childhood



Climate Change has been deemed the most significant public health threat of our time, affecting respiratory and cardiovascular health and mental wellbeing, increasing instances of vector-borne diseases, and harm from extreme weather events. Health Professionals are uniquely positioned to lead by example (and encourage their patients) to adopt climate friendly, healthy habits.

The TWO and TWENTY Challenge

The goal is to be active for at least Two hours a week, being physically active at least 20+ minutes in length. Research shows that people who spend at least 2 hours per week have better health outcomes.¹ [Take Part Here](#)

HOW NATURE HELPS IN EARLY LIFE

- *Helps contribute to a Healthy Birth Weight*- Studies have shown that mothers who live near green spaces and interact with nature at least three times a week deliver babies with higher birth weights.²
- *Contributes to Parents Health*- Parents who frequent green spaces while pregnant and in the early years of childhood development have better physical and mental health outcomes, and children have overall healthier weights.³
- *Dream a little Dream*- Children who interact with green spaces and the outdoors during the day (Forest Schools as an example) sleep longer and have better health outcomes during the first five years of life.⁴
- *Helps Develop Gross Motor Skills*- Children who play in outdoor or green spaces develop superior motor skills, balance, and coordination earlier than children who play on the playground or other "man-made" play experiences.⁵

CLIMATE & HEALTH

Tips when talking about climate & health. The subject of climate change can feel overwhelming.

These approaches can help link the impact of personal choices on our health and the health of our environment.

- Respect the environment—and the patients you help. As individuals spend more time in nature, they are more likely to engage in practices that limit their impact on the climate at both a local and global level.
- Outdoor Activities and reducing climate impact can be as simple as "This for That" by substituting outdoor activities for indoor ones.
- Apply the **Precautionary Principle**, developed initially to protect the environment and help to guide health protection activities. Applying the precautionary principle means that risk reduction activities with individuals, families, and communities should minimize creating negative environmental and avoid hazards while maximizing the overall positive effects on people's health and wellbeing. An example of this is riding your bike, riding you bike in high traffic areas can come with more risk then riding your bike on a trail system or in a park.
- Engage with nature in a way that has an impact on you. Love the water? go for a swim, and think about how you can protect the water for future generations.

CITED SOURCES:

¹ Frontiers Psychology. Volume 10, 722 (2019)

² Child Youth Environment. Volume 14, 21 (2004)

³ Occupational Environmental Medicine. Volume 71, 527 (2014)

⁴ International Journal of Health. Volume 17, 43 (2018)

⁵ Acta Paediatrica. Volume 102, 83 (2013)