

# ARE WE OVERLOOKING THE OUTDOORS?



*Spending time outdoors, or "green time," is a powerful counterbalance to the negative effects of screen time.*

Did you know that children ages 8 to 18 get 7.5 hours of daily screen time for entertainment alone? That adds up to **nearly four months a year spent looking at screens** for fun. Compare that to the four to seven minutes a day the average American child spends playing outside.



## THE SCREEN TIME EFFECT



### BRAIN DEVELOPMENT:

Negatively impacts the development of brain areas responsible for attention, complex memory, visual processing, and empathy in young children.

### EYESIGHT:

Linked to increased rates of myopia (nearsightedness) due to prolonged close-up focus and lack of natural light.

### MENTAL WELL-BEING:

Associated with cognitive decline and memory problems in adolescents, and linked to higher risks of Internet addiction.

### SENSORY PROCESSING ISSUES:

The highly stimulating, two-dimensional nature of screens overloads a child's visual and auditory systems, depriving them of the diverse sensory input necessary for healthy development. This can lead to sensory overload, fidgeting, and difficulty concentrating in real-world settings.

### POOR POSTURAL CONTROL:

Sitting and staring at screens can weaken a child's core and neck muscles, leading to poor posture and fatigue. This lack of foundational stability can also make fine motor tasks, such as writing, more difficult.

### BALANCE & COORDINATION DEFICITS:

Screen time replaces the active, dynamic movements necessary for developing the vestibular and proprioceptive systems. As a result, children may struggle with balance, spatial awareness, and coordinated movements.



## GREEN TIME ADVANTAGE



### BRAIN & SKILLS:

Mitigates the negative neurodevelopmental outcomes of screen time. Outdoor experiences can improve skills in attention, memory, and even nonverbal social cues.

### VISION HEALTH:

Proven to slow the deterioration of vision in children with myopia. Regular outdoor time is crucial for healthy eye development.

### MENTAL RESILIENCE:

Protects against the mental health conditions and cognitive decline linked to excessive screen use. Nature can serve as a protective buffer.

### SENSORY & MOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT:

Outdoor play helps children integrate their senses and build a strong foundation for learning. Exposing them to various textures, temperatures, and sounds it helps develop essential sensory and motor skills. Activities like climbing and swinging also help build the vestibular sense, which is vital for balance and attention.

### CORE STRENGTH & STABILITY:

Outdoor activities like climbing, jumping, and balancing strengthen a child's core muscles. A strong core is essential for good posture, handwriting, and overall coordination.

### EMOTIONAL REGULATION & PROBLEM SOLVING:

Outdoor play often involves risks and challenges, which help children learn about their own capabilities. Without pre-programmed activities to guide them, they learn to think independently and solve problems creatively. This can help them develop self-regulation and reduce stress.

# USING VITAMIN N (NATURE)

## THE BEST ANTIDOTE TO SCREEN TIME



LABEL  
REFILL 0 1 2 4 5 ~~PRN~~

# Rx PRESCRIPTION

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NAME \_\_\_\_\_ AGE \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**DOSAGE:**  
Experts suggest a daily dose of "Vitamin N." **Aim for at least 60 minutes of unstructured outdoor time** to support healthy vision, brain development, and overall well-being. Many child development experts suggest up to 3 hours a day.\*

**HOW TO USE:**  
Getting your dose is simple and doesn't require a special trip.

- **Play in the backyard.** A few minutes of unstructured outdoor play can be a powerful antidote to screen time.
- **Take a family walk.** A post-dinner stroll can improve sleep and provide valuable bonding time.
- **Explore local spaces.** Head to a nearby park, playground, or trail. Even a short visit to a new spot can feel like an adventure.
- **Do an activity outside.** Try eating a meal on the porch, reading a book under a tree, or even doing homework on a blanket in the grass.

**POSITIVE SIDE EFFECTS:**  
A regular dose of "Vitamin N" has been shown to improve mood, reduce stress, and strengthen family bonds.

**REFILLS:**  
No prescription needed! Your daily dose of "Vitamin N" is always available.

\*Angela Hanscom, a pediatric occupational therapist, author of *Balanced and Barefoot: How Unrestricted Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident, and Capable Children*, and founder of the therapeutic outdoor program "Timbernook", prescribes three hours per day for children—a figure that is consistent with recommendations from other child development specialists.



EVERY KID OUTDOORS  
ADVENTURE  
CHALLENGE



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