

YOUR CHILD'S NEED
of SUNSHINE *and* OPEN AIR



*Lesson Material on Care of
the Preschool Child
No. 7*



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Has sunlight any special value?

Although people have known in a general way for a long time that sunlight is beneficial, exact knowledge as to its effect is comparatively recent. The normal growth of children has been found to depend not only upon the food they eat but also upon the amount of direct sunlight they receive. Sunlight helps their bodies to utilize their food.

What happens if a child has too little sunlight?

If a baby has been kept out of direct sunlight his bones are almost certain to develop abnormally, his muscles to be flabby, and his skin to be pale. He probably will have the disease called rickets. This affects the whole body, but has its worst effect on the bones. As he grows older his legs may curve more or less badly, or his ankles and wrists may have knobby joints.

How can you be sure your child has enough sunlight?

Sun baths in the direct sunlight are the simplest way of getting enough sunshine. As the child walks and runs about he is likely to seek the sunny part of the yard or playground. You should encourage him in doing this. See that he plays in the sunshine a large part of the time that he is out of doors. In addition to play in the direct sunshine, when perhaps clothes that cover most of his body must be worn, your child should continue to have special sun baths—which he should have had from babyhood.

How can you give sun baths to your child?

Sun baths can be given in the back yard, on the porch, on a roof, or in any other place where the sunshine strikes directly. The best sunshine for them is in the morning. At first only the child's hands and face should be exposed if he has not been accustomed all or most of his life to sun baths; then the amount of skin left bare can be increased until nearly all his body is exposed to the sun. A thin white cotton slip or combination suit that is low-necked, sleeveless, and has very short legs is the best clothing to wear. After your child has become quite tanned his body is used to the sun. Then it is well to let him play entirely naked in the sunshine for two hours a day if you have a yard or other good place private enough for you to arrange this. In the hottest months give the sun baths before 11 a. m. and after 3 p. m.

Why must the child's skin be bare, and why must he not be behind glass?

If your child has his clothes on or is behind a closed window not all the sun rays reach his skin. You can see a proof of this in your own knowledge that the parts of the body kept covered by clothing remain white and that a child kept indoors is generally pale. The child who is tanned has been getting the most benefit from the sun.

What benefit is there in the open air when the sun is not shining?

Exercise in outdoor air helps children to develop properly. If they are dressed in accordance with the temperature some play in the open air is beneficial no matter how cold it is. (In unusual weather, such as a sudden very cold spell, or on a stormy day you will use your judgment about breaking your out-of-door rule.) On rainy days you can take advantage of a protected porch or at least put your child in a room whose windows have been opened wide. Thus he will have fresh air to breathe while he is running about and playing actively.

Is there any specific benefit in outdoors rather than indoors?

The more time your child spends in the open air during the day and the more he sleeps outdoors or with windows so wide that he is very nearly out of doors, the more power of resistance to disease he is likely to have. The indoor child is likely to be in greater danger of catching communicable diseases; and contagion can occur between two children together indoors, whereas if they had been playing together out in the open, perhaps the one who already had the disease might not "give" it to the other. In cold weather it is the play and walking out of doors that benefit. In summer, if it is possible, your child should eat, sleep, and have his quiet play in properly screened out-of-door places as well as play actively in the open air and sunshine.

Problems.

1. Has your child a sand box in a sunny place?
2. What is the best method for giving sun baths?
3. How many hours does your child actually spend out of doors each day in each season of the year? Make a record for a week and see.
4. When the wind is blowing dust up and whirling it about, where do you put your child to play so that he may have open air and sunshine, but not have his nose and throat irritated by the dust?
5. How do you arrange the windows in your child's bedroom at night to let in all the fresh air possible and yet avoid allowing direct drafts to strike him?

6. Why should you make a point of being with your child during at least a part of the time that he plays out of doors taking his sun baths?

References.

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