Research shows that as our children become disconnected from nature, they have a higher risk of obesity, dislike—and even fear—of the outdoors, and behavioral problems requiring medication.

When children play outside, they have limitless opportunities to learn about science, observation skills, language and literacy, social skills, math, visual-spatial skills, music and movement, and the arts.

Supervision is more than just watching for falls and bad behavior. Teach your children how to properly use toys and play equipment and help them if they struggle. Know how to respond to emergencies and injuries.

Consider your child’s age and abilities when selecting play equipment and toys. If you have more than one child, separate toys according to age group. Consider these three age categories: up to 2 years, 2–5 years, and 5–12 years.

Your child will fall, so make sure surfaces beneath equipment such as slides, swings, and jungle gyms are soft enough to break the fall and prevent injury. For example, loose materials such as sand or gravel are good fall surfaces, but not for infants and toddlers who might swallow them. Grass, concrete, asphalt, and dirt, on the other hand, are not acceptable. A one foot fall onto concrete can cause a concussion.

Conduct routine equipment maintenance based on manufacturer recommendations and Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines. Check for broken equipment, gaps, or entanglement hazards. Periodically seal, stain, or paint wooden equipment to prevent deterioration. Check for missing or damaged parts. Remove scattered debris, litter, or rocks.