



Colds and Outdoor Play Fact Sheet

September 2020



What causes a cold?

A cold is not caused by exposure to cold air, dampness or being outside.

A cold is a viral infection.

How is a cold spread?

When a child coughs, the virus in their saliva is sprayed into the air and breathed in by other children. Colds are also spread by touching as the virus goes from skin to skin.

Why are colds common in the winter time?

The cold weather means that children spend more time indoors with the windows shut. Germs spread more easily in the cosy, warm environment. **Research shows that children are more likely to catch a cold if the heat is turned up.**

How can we prevent the spread of colds?

- Wash hands frequently, especially before eating food and after going to the toilet.
- Kissing on the mouth spreads germs. Kissing on the forehead or on the cheek will not spread as many germs.
- Children should be taught to cough or sneeze into a tissue and not their hands.
- Children must have access to fresh air. **Sunlight is known to kill viruses.**
- **Children should be going outside even in cold, damp weather.**

Research shows that winter weather will not worsen any cold symptoms. It is harder for germs to travel in fresh air. Stress makes everybody more vulnerable to infections. Have fun and relax! Research shows that people under stress are more likely to experience a cold than people who are stress free.

- **SMOKING - BABIES AND CHILDREN LIVING WITH SMOKERS ARE MORE PRONE TO CATCHING COLDS AND HAVE MORE DIFFICULTY GETTING BETTER. SMOKING IN THE CAR IS VERY BAD FOR YOU AND YOUR PASSENGERS.**

Other benefits of playing outside

Physical activity and energetic play provides exercise, encourages co-ordination and helps children develop physical skills.

The Children's Play Council has done some research that shows that children who have easy, regular access to outdoor, energetic play:

- Are better at physical tasks e.g. doing up a coat, neat handwriting and so on.
- Are fitter and more able to keep up with their friends in the playground at school.
- Are less likely to become stressed and anxious.

RESEARCH ON BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND CHILDREN'S LEARNING HAS PROVED WITHOUT ANY DOUBT THAT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INCREASES THE FLOW OF BLOOD TO THE BRAIN, THIS HELPS THE CONNECTIONS IN CHILDREN'S BRAINS TO GROW, MULTIPLY AND WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY.

In order to keep warm outside children need:

- Layers of clothing - vest, T-shirt, fleece, hat, socks and/or tights.
- Waterproof boots or shoes
- Waterproof, warm coat
- Scarf and gloves
- ***Clothing that is labelled with their name so it does not get lost.***

I hope all this information helps you to understand why we expect, and encourage, your children to play outside whenever possible.

