



May 30 to June 5, 2021
parachute.ca/SafeKidsWeek



Backgrounder

**Take part in Parachute Safe Kids Week,
happening May 30 to June 5, 2021 in communities across Canada.**

Parachute Safe Kids Week is an annual awareness campaign designed to bring attention to predictable and preventable injuries in children. In 2021, Parachute Safe Kids Week focuses on the topic of outdoor play, encouraging children to **#PlaySafeOutdoors** and take part in active, unstructured and exciting play, daily.

Lots of physical activity and limited down time (e.g., screen time and sitting for a long time) are key for children's healthy development. When children spend too much time inside, they miss out on the benefits of outdoor play, including healthy emotional, mental, social and physical development.

Children and youth are struggling to meet healthy movement guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic. **This is why Parachute Safe Kids Week aims to provide parents with simple, clear tips to support their kids to #PlaySafeOutdoors.**

Encourage your children to take part in outdoor, active and unstructured play.

- Unstructured play is child-led, letting children follow their own interests, get creative and have fun. Unstructured play encourages empathy, self-awareness and self-esteem, social and emotional learning, and teamwork skills.
- Unstructured play takes less planning and requires fewer resources than organized play, such as team sports, which may be on hold during COVID-19. Encourage your children to spend time outdoors, doing activities they are most interested in, such as walking, wheeling or general exploration and play.

Don't let fear stop you from letting your child benefit from outdoor play.

- Children are less likely to be injured during outdoor play than organized sports.
- Serious injuries from play are rare. The positive impact of letting children #PlaySafeOutdoors generally far outweighs the risk of serious injury.

Know the difference between a real hazard and a risk.

- A hazard is something dangerous that can cause serious injury, such as a broken railing or unsafe equipment. Help your child #PlaySafeOutdoors by managing hazards while letting your child explore risk-taking, such as exploring the woods or climbing a high tree.
- Try to match your supervision with the risk of the activity your child is engaging in and their capabilities. For example, it's important to supervise your child around potential hazards such as water — an adult should be present as lifeguard. Less supervision may be needed when your child is exploring risks, such as playing in the sand or climbing.
- Remember, risk changes over time as your child develops. Getting “lost” for a toddler could be a hidey-hole in the bushes, but an older child could safely wander the neighbourhood with friends and find new places to play.

Ask yourself, “what is one small thing I can do to encourage my child to increase their outdoor, active play time?”

- If your child isn't very interested in outdoor play, you can start with encouraging them to go with you to a nearby park or nature trail, or search for animal tracks or signs of summer.
- Help make outdoor play fun for your child! Items that children can move around, such as rocks, wood, baskets, paintbrushes and water, a rope swing, buckets and sand can help your child use their imagination outdoors and make it fun.
- Start small. You can start by watching your child while they are playing and challenge yourself to interfere as little as possible. Count to 17 next time you feel like saying “be careful”.
- Your confidence to support your child to #PlaySafeOutdoors will likely increase as time passes. Your supervision may change from watching through a window to checking in from time to time, and giving your child more freedom as you are comfortable.
- Letting your child #PlaySafeOutdoors, with all its risks, encourages healthy development and fun. Your child will thank you!

For more information, visit parachute.ca/safekidsweek