

Risky outdoor play positively impacts children's health, says study

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Children who engage in risky outdoor play see greater physical and social health benefits.

New research from UBC and the Child & Family Research Institute at BC Children's Hospital shows that risky outdoor play is not only good for children's health but also encourages creativity, social skills and resilience.

The findings, published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, found that [children](#) who participated in physical activity such as climbing and jumping, rough and tumble play and exploring alone, displayed greater physical and social [health](#).

"We found that play environments where children could take risks promoted increased play time, social interactions, creativity and resilience," said Mariana Brussoni, lead author of the study, and assistant professor in UBC's School of Population and Public Health and Department of Pediatrics. "These positive results reflect the importance of supporting children's risky [outdoor play](#) opportunities as a means of promoting children's health and active lifestyles."

Playgrounds that offer natural elements such as trees and plants, changes in height, and freedom for children to engage in activities of their own choosing, have positive impacts on health, behaviour and social development.

"These spaces give children a chance to learn about risk and learn about their own limits," said Brussoni, also a scientist in the British Columbia Injury Research & Prevention Unit at the Child & Family Research Institute at BC Children's Hospital.

Safety concerns, such as injury, were seen as the main reason for limiting risky outdoor play. Researchers found that playground safety standards and too much supervision prevented children from engaging in risky activities.

"Monitoring children's activities may be a more appropriate approach than active supervision, particularly for older children," said Brussoni. "We recommend considering policy, practice and built environment approaches to risky outdoor play that balance safety with children's other health outcomes."

More information: "What is the Relationship between Risky Outdoor Play and Health in Children? A Systematic Review." *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2015, 12(6), 6423-6454; [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph120606423](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph120606423)

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