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Surprise: Parks encourage more activity

We've always known that parks encourage families and kids to get outdoors and move around, but a recent study shows that kids living near parks get more exercise even when they're not actually in the park.

The study showed that for every additional park located within a half mile of a child's home, the likelihood of walking to school more than doubled among girls and leisure walking by boys increased by 60 percent. It was reported at the American Heart Association's Conference on Nutrition, Physical Activity and Metabolism.

"There was a strong association between walking and the number of nearby public open recreational spaces, including neighborhood parks, playgrounds and sports fields," said Tracie A. Barnett, Ph.D., lead author of the study.

In the study, Barnett notes how people have decreased their activity levels.

"In the past few decades we have become more sedentary due to the increased use of labor-saving devices, motorized transportation, television and computers," said Barnett. "In addition, children are spending more time inside, yet we know that spending time outdoors is an important determinant of activity," she added.

When children play outdoors, it's important to best make use of their time. That's why we created our fitness-oriented Intensity® play complex. Intensity is designed to give kids a full workout through climbing, spinning, and jumping.

Core muscles are used in many spinning events, while upper and lower body muscles are strengthened through the various climbing and jumping activities. Kids have so much fun playing on Intensity that they don't even realize that they are receiving a workout.

And for organizations that want to get the fitness benefits of Intensity in a more organized way, we've created the [Intensity Curriculum](#) with different activities and games for various Intensity events. The kit comes with the curriculum booklet and flash cards, a pen and stopwatch.



Cutting play time is short sighted

By Tim Ahern

We all want bright kids. We want them to get a running start so that when they enter school, they're ready to excel at reading, math and such from the very beginning.

But sometimes I worry that those with the highest ambitions for their kids may focus so much on the mind that they neglect the need for play and exercise. That's why it concerned me to read that a recent study by Cincinnati Children's Hospital found that children between ages 3 and 6 may not be getting enough exercise.



Even more of a concern is the reason: Some of the day care providers said they feel pressured by parents to make outdoor time a lower priority. Some also worry about injuries or seek to avoid playground upkeep costs.

The study included 49 child care centers in the Cincinnati area. Despite the limited geographic scope, I believe the results reflect the reality you'd find anywhere in the country. The study was sponsored by the National Institutes of Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Kristen Copeland, M.D., the study's main author, told WCPO-TV in Cincinnati that "child care providers told us that many parents were more focused on their children learning cognitive skills ... than on recess. And yet child care providers realized that some of the most valuable lessons in science, nature, cause and effect, and even important social skills such as problem-solving and peer negotiation, all come from playing outdoors on the playground."

Sadly, neglecting outdoor play can backfire academically. The American Academy of Pediatrics says free and unstructured play is essential to a child's development in and out of the classroom. "The challenge for society, schools and parents is to strike the balance that allows all children to reach their potential, without pushing them beyond their personal comfort limits, and while allowing them personal free time," the report says.

For our part, we'll just keep producing the best playgrounds possible. We're constantly researching new possibilities for helping kids exercise their bodies and their imaginations. And we'll be introducing an exciting new line of playgrounds soon that we're especially excited about.

Sorry -- can't tell you about that yet! But your kids will love it.

Celebrate National Fitness and Sports Month in May

May is National Fitness and Sports Month, and there's no better way to celebrate it than with a visit to a BCI Burke playground. BCI Burke offers a variety of playgrounds for kids of all ages to engage in physical activity.

It is recommended that children and adolescents get 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity each day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In order to help kids get the hour of activity, we at BCI Burke make exercise fun for all ages.

Our [Little Buddies®](#) and [Circuit Play® Beginnings](#) playgrounds are geared to kids aged 2 to 5 with activities that are size appropriate for pre-school bodies. Playgrounds are designed to stimulate the imagination while also providing activities kids can climb on and slide down.



Our original [Circuit Play®](#) and [Series 3000](#) focus on kids aged 5 to 12 with more challenging activities that allow kids to climb higher and test their balance. And our fitness-oriented [Intensity®](#) fitness play complex gets kids jumping, spinning and climbing their way to better health.

To make it easier for kids to get the most fitness benefits from Intensity, we've created the Intensity Curriculum for teachers and supervisors. The curriculum provides information about games and activities that kids can do on Intensity.

Bringing joy one playground at a time

When Julie Kutilek took a break from the playground business to raise her three kids, she knew that one day she'd be back. So when all three children were old enough to go to school, and she started her own playground business, her first call was to BCI Burke.

“I love helping and watching a playground evolve from step one to step 10. Then I get to see kids’ expressions when it’s finished, and I know that all of the work and effort is completely worth it. I am so excited to work with a company that gives so much joy to people,” said Kutilek, owner of Creative Sites, LLC, which represents BCI Burke in Nebraska.

But it was the quality of Burke’s products that made her want to represent the company.

“When people say Burke playgrounds last for decades, they mean it. For instance, I know a park with a Burke playground that was built in 1997. For the past twelve years, hundreds of kids per week have played on the equipment and it still looks brand new,” said Kutilek.

Kutilek also knows the importance of having all of the parts delivered on time before a playground can be installed and is thankful for Burke’s consistency.

“Burke has excellent delivery times with no missing parts. They will not ship their product if there is even one bolt missing. They ensure their product is complete and consistently strive to meet their goals of 100 percent complete and on-time deliveries,” she said.

To make sure that projects are going smoothly, Kutilek says that Burke executives aren’t afraid to step in and help.

“The response the company gives to its representatives and customers is unbelievable. They actually get involved with projects. When the CEO comes down to assist in a playground project, you know you’re working with a special company,” she said.

