

# Children's Health

## Where Are All The Kids?

(NAPSA)—On a walk through a typical American neighborhood, one might be hard pressed to find a barefoot kid chasing down a toad, or building a tree fort in the woods, or walking to a favorite fishing hole with a rod and a can of worms. Organized play at the soccerplex has replaced unstructured play down at the creek.

As American childhood has moved indoors, research shows that many of today's children are actually gaining weight during their summer break. And as electronic entertainment replaces both structured and unstructured outdoor experiences, many children are being raised so cut off from their natural world that they are not developing a connection with nature. Not only is this connection an important quality-of-life issue by contributing to emotional and physical well-being, it also forms the cornerstone of an environmental stewardship ethic.

Connecting our children to nature through outdoor experiences pays clear dividends: Children who play outside are more active and more physically fit; time in nature improves children's academic performance, concentration, balance, coordination and self-esteem; and playing outside even reduces the severity of symptoms of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which affects millions of American children.



**Getting your child outdoors pays clear dividends, such as improved academic performance and physical fitness.**

The National Wildlife Federation, home of Ranger Rick, is warning that one of the contributors to the childhood obesity epidemic in America may be this lack of outdoor play. Kids today are spending 50 percent less time outdoors than they did just 20 years ago.

Ranger Rick and his crew have put together a great report full of ideas and solutions for getting kids to “go outside and play.” Some of these include connecting kids to nature through environmental education, promoting outdoor play through our public health systems, and encouraging parents to build in regular time for outdoor play through the NWF online parent resource, Green Hour.

To get that helpful report, just go to Ranger Rick's Web site at [www.nwf.org/kidsreport](http://www.nwf.org/kidsreport).